

**CONTEMPORARY  
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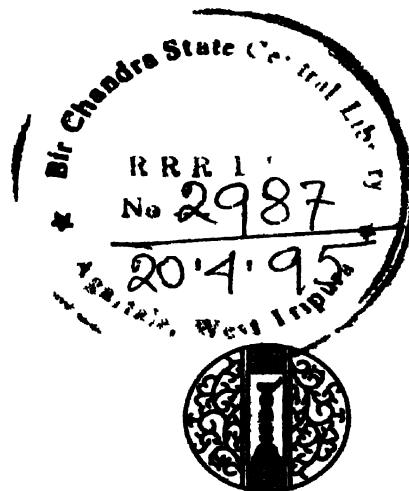
**Sufism**



CONTEMPORARY  
RELEVANCE OF

# Śūfiśm

EDITED BY  
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**T**HIS entire commerce of existence, its every mode and form is gathered into one single question: 'What is all this?' 'Why all this?' 'What for all this?' We take the support of reason, and in the light of what we have named learning, we keep moving along whichever path becomes visible. But we do not find any solution which can slake the thirst for discovering the ends of this tangle... As we turn towards the old solution... that, 'An embodiment of knowledge and strength is the Presence behind the veil'... then we suddenly emerge into the light. Now radiance floods in. Every question finds its answer, every demand finds its fulfilment, every thirst is slaked — as if this perplexity was a vice-like grip which opened at the gentle touch of the key.

**MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD**

*Ghubar-e-Khatir*

Letter dated October 17, 1942

Ahmednagar Fort Prison



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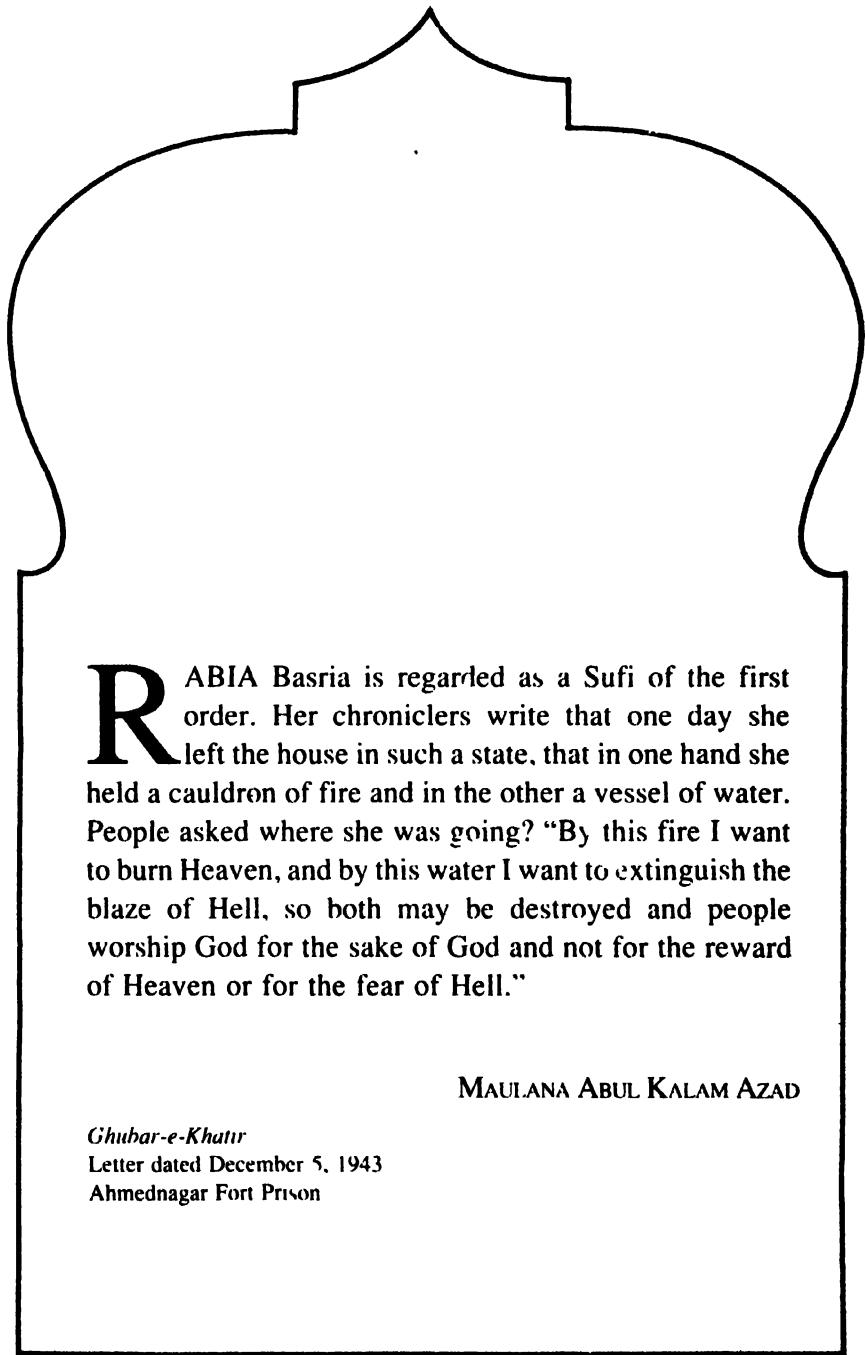
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**R**ABIA Basira is regarded as a Sufi of the first order. Her chroniclers write that one day she left the house in such a state, that in one hand she held a cauldron of fire and in the other a vessel of water. People asked where she was going? "By this fire I want to burn Heaven, and by this water I want to extinguish the blaze of Hell, so both may be destroyed and people worship God for the sake of God and not for the reward of Heaven or for the fear of Hell."

MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD

*Ghubar-e-Khattir*

Letter dated December 5, 1943  
Ahmednagar Fort Prison



**SUFISM  
HISTORY AND  
PHILOSOPHY**



# The Vedant and Sufism

## A Comparative Study

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B. N. Pande

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### I

**V**EDANTIK mysticism has its roots in the Upanishads. The Upanishads are made up of the utterances of dedicated men and women who were engaged in the pursuit of the highest truth. Wisdom for them involved not merely the intellect but the entire soul. It was not with the theories that they were concerned; their entire conduct of life was at stake and success depended on understanding the meaning and destiny of man and the Universe. The verses of the Upanishads are charged with exalted emotion. They use words in which the high tension of the spirit finds relief. The sage Svetasvatara said that the Upanishad was revealed to him through the power of his penance and the grace of God. They were deliverances of seers in a state of God-intoxication.

The difficulties of interpretation inherent in the structure of the Upanishads are enormous. Their dependence upon the Vedas is undeniable. Nevertheless, the Upanishads make it quite clear that they embody a philosophy which goes beyond Vedic thought. In many

passages Vedic knowledge is held in secondary importance, if not valueless, for the attainment of the highest aims of life. In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, Narada, a sage, confesses to *Sanat Kumara* that although he had studied the *Rg-Veda*, the *Yajur-Veda*, the *Sama-Veda*, the *Atharva-Veda* and other sciences, and was, therefore, learned in the scriptures, he was, 'Not learned in the *atman*. Yet, I have heard from such as are like you that he who knows the *atman* vanquishes sorrow.' The *Katha Upanishad* teaches, 'Not by learning is the *atman* attained, not by genius and much knowledge of books.' In the *Mundaka Upanishad* the four Vedas and the six auxiliary sciences are spoken of as interior knowledge (*apara vidya*), through which the Imperishable Being cannot be known.

*Svetaketu*, who had been sent by his father Aruni to study the Vedas, returns after 12 years, 'Full of conceit and arrogance, believing himself wise.' But, he fails to answer his father's questions on the One, the Self-Existent, with whose knowledge everything is known. The father, thereupon, instructs the son on this subject.

THE Upanishads distinguish between two kinds of knowledge. One is called *Para* (the higher), the other *Apara* (inferior). *Apara* knowledge is empirical; it is the knowledge of plurality, of becoming, of the world of phenomena. In the picturesque language of the *Katha*, the Creator pierces holes outwards in reality and hence, men look outwards to find the real. The world of forms is the expression of the empirical attributes of the Supreme Being. They give rise to phenomenal forms of experience. Thus, the phenomenal is known through the phenomenal.

OUR sense organs and their experiences, the intellect and its logic, are the means of acquiring this knowledge. Its basis is the duality of the knowing subject and the known object. The sense data upon which empirical knowledge is based give to us the knowledge of the fleeting world but not of the eternal; the knowledge of the other but not of the self; the knowledge of the veils but not of the mystery which lies concealed under them. Such knowledge is a matter of the

words, of mere names. This knowledge is accompanied by feelings of pain or pleasure, and both of these cause soul's unrest. It is speculative, discursive knowledge, and is a hindrance to the realization of the Truth of the True (*Satyasya Satyam*). In contrast with the highest knowledge, ordinary relative knowledge is as good as ignorance (*avidya*), false knowledge, or delusion (*maya*).

PARA or the higher knowledge is the knowledge of the Absolute, of the truly Real. The end of the Vedas is long life and happiness on earth, dwelling in paradise after death. The reward of sacrifice is well-being and success on earth and the company of gods hereafter. The aim of the Upanishads is deliverance from bondage of the temporal and the phenomenal. So long as man chooses to remain under the imperious yoke of the senses, he is estranged from his imperishable and eternal centre of being. He is the sport of instincts, inclinations, emotions and passions. He is like a ship which is tossed upon the waves in a stormy sea, rudderless and without compass. The Upanishads point to a haven of calm and serene waters where there is no buffeting from winds nor rocking from sea-swells. The spirit of man, conscious of itself, resplendent and majestic, watches the panorama of change and appearance, self-assured, harmonized, a centre of light. The mind of such a man is compared to the flame of a lamp which does not flicker though winds blow around it from the four quarters. His reason and will are steady and balanced, the pleasures of this world and of paradise do not tempt him, nor do pains and sorrows terrify him.

THE ideal of non-attachment is the goal of knowledge. This knowledge cannot be reached by ordinary processes of sensation, perception and conception. The Upanishads point out: 'Thou canst not comprehend the comprehender of comprehending, thou canst not know the knower of knowing.' (*Brha Taittiranyaka*, 3.4.2).<sup>1</sup> Again the *Chandogya* explains (7.2 4.1): 'If a man sees no other, hears no other, that is the infinite, if he sees, hears and knows another, that is the finite. The infinite is the immortal, the finite is mortal.'<sup>2</sup>

## II

THE Upanishads discuss the means by which higher knowledge can be achieved. The end of this endeavour is to know the Brahman or the atman. It is, therefore, named the *Brahma-Vidya* or the *Atma-Vidya*. Now the atman is, 'The immortal veiled by the (empirical) reality.' It becomes wrapped up in name and form. The *Taittiriya* mentions the material, the physiological, the vital, the mental and the rational sheaths. Within them is seated the atman which is pure bliss.

THE way to this innermost sanctum is lighted by the higher knowledge. The way of higher knowledge leads to the state of unity, the realization of identity, confluence of being and thought. The *Maitri Upanishad* asks the traveller along this path:

That which abides in consciousness  
Unknown, beyond conception,  
wrapped in mystery.  
In that do thou immerse consciousness.

THE instruments of inferior knowledge (*Apara Vidya*) are senses, intellect, the discursive reason. Higher knowledge (*Para Vidya*) is the reverse of empirical knowledge; the method of its acquisition is the reverse of that of the other, namely, the suppression of the activity of senses (*Brhadaranyaka*, 1.5.23)<sup>3</sup> and the cessation of empirical thinking (*Mundaka*, 3.1.8).<sup>4</sup>

THIS requires the fulfilment of certain preparatory conditions and a discipline. A preparatory condition is compliance with the law of Dharma – study, worship, almsgiving, penance. But this is dispensable. Other conditions are discipleship of a teacher who knows the ways and cultivation of certain qualities. Within man is seated the *atman* which is pure bliss; it is known by tranquillity, self-restraint, self-denial, patience, collectedness and purity of body and mind.

THE discipline consists of complete mastery over one's mind, and concentration. By yoga, one gains complete mastery over one's mind, and realizes the unity of the Self and the Absolute. The

*Svetasvatara Upanishad* describes the practice and explains its philosophy. The practice consists of two parts. The first part prescribes a physiological discipline—the control of breath (*pranayama*), and the control of the senses by the mind (*pratyahara*); and the second part lays down the system of psychological discipline, namely, collection of the mind and its abstraction from external activity (*dharana*), and meditation to understand the Real (*dhyana*). These steps lead to the absorption of thought into Reality, of subject into object, to the realization of the oneness of the individual soul and the universal soul (*samadhi*).

ONE who reaches this state of higher knowledge or cosmic consciousness passes beyond sorrow, doubt and tear. He has destroyed all the particularism of the ego, overcome the separateness of the self and the other, resolved all conflicts, realized the unity of all existence, the identity of his self with all other selves. He makes the universal good the end of his life because he understands the nature of the universal self and he makes his body and mind the vehicle of his supreme consciousness. He acts without attachment, devotes himself to disinterested service with a firm and steady mind. Master of himself, poised, he is indifferent to pain and pleasure. He lives and moves in the world like a white swan uncontaminated by the impurities of the lake on which it swims. He has gained wisdom, grace and peace and he dwells for ever in the land of no sorrow.

### III

THE Upanishadic spirit of enquiry inspires the Vedantic thinkers to ask questions concerning the nature of that which is subject to change and that which persists in change. The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* opens with the question: 'What is the cause? (Is it) Brahman? Whence are we born? By what do we live? On what are we established?'

THIS search for the substratum, 'That from which all things spring, into which they are resolved, and in which they live and have

their beings.' is answered in many ways. Sometimes it is one of the elements, water or air or fire, and sometimes a vital function like breath (*prana*), which is regarded as the First Principle of the Universe. At other times, creation is considered as the activity of a personal god—Prajapati, and a theistic explanation is offered.

ACCORDING to the *Taittiriya*, Brahman is being, knowledge and infinity. 'From this Self, verily, ether arose; from ether air; from air fire; from fire water; from water the earth; from the earth the herbs; from herbs food; from food the person (*purusa*).' It is explained that the *purusa* or the individual soul is covered with five sheaths, the innermost is the sheath of bliss (*anandamayakosa*), outside it is the sheath of intellect (*vijnana*), then comes the mind-sheath (*manas*), then the sheath of life or breath (*prana*) and then the outermost or the material sheath (*anna*). The *atman* dwells inside the five sheaths.

IN the *Mundaka Upanishad* a pupil asks his teacher: 'What is that in a person which keeps awake, goes to sleep, dreams and enjoys happiness?' The answer is that all these are states of the *atman* which is established in the Supreme self (*Paramatman*). This *atman* is the first principle and is completely present in itself. Yajnavalkya explains to his wife Maitreyi, who is anxious to know how to attain immortality, that all objects in the world, earthly possessions, men and relations, even gods, are valued not for their own sake but for the sake of the *atman*. 'Verily, Oh Maitreyi, it is the Self (*atman*) that should be seen, heard of, reflected on and meditated upon. Verily, by the seeing of, by the hearing of, by the thinking of, by the understanding of the self, this is known' (*Bhadaranyaka*, 11.4.5).<sup>5</sup>

THUS the Upanishads teach that by knowing the *atman* the Universe is known, for indeed, there is no universe outside the *atman*. Hence the famous phrases, 'This verily is that' (*Etad vai tat*), 'That thou art' (*Tat tvamasi*), 'I am Brahma' (*Aham Brahmasmi*), which is exactly equivalent to the Sufistic aphorism *Anal Haq* (I am the Reality).

## IV

THE great theme of the Upanishads is to call man to his high destiny. Man may be involved in the universe of time, space and causality, but man is not merely that, for he is the bearer of a Self which transcends nature and the categories of the transient, changing world. Each individual is therefore compelled by his very constitution, to endeavour to find himself, to realize through his limitations the eternal and the immortal self which he really and truly is. The Upanishads do not merely propound a philosophy, they lay down a practical course of life and indicate the goal to be attained.

THE Upanishads seek truth and pursue it by reason. They do not exclude anyone from this search because of creed or caste or colour. In fact this is not a privilege which may be granted to some and denied to others. Knowledge of the self and of truth is the right of every human being; none can be deprived of it.

ACCORDING to the Upanishads, life is a pilgrimage, man is a pilgrim. The pilgrim's point of departure is his natural state. A firm conviction and an unfaltering faith are the prerequisites of the journey, for only those who are stout of heart and do not tire, have the chance to reach the top, and to attain the prize of unsurpassing value, beyond the dreams of desire. This is a state of release from passion, of freedom from desire, of self-illumination wherein is bliss everlasting. The entire process is a lifelong discipline in which the whole of the man is involved-intellect, will, feeling. It is the training of the will to overcome transient desire; it is the subjugation of enslaving passion; it is the pursuit of action without expectation of reward or fear of punishment, withdrawal from attachment to pleasure and pain.

THE *Brhadaranyaka* tells us, 'Therefore, he who knows it (Brahman) as such, having become calm, self-controlled, withdrawn, patient and collected, sees the Self in his own self, sees all in the Self. Evil does not overcome him; he overcomes all evil. Evil does not affect him; he consumes all evil. Free from evil, free from taint, free from doubt he becomes a knower of Brahma.'

THE discipline of mind which leads to this state is known as the *yaga* (union), whose elements have been described above. By its means the senses are merged into mind, mind into knowledge, knowledge into the great self, the great self into the Absolute. 'The revelation of the Absolute, procures freedom from fetters and sorrow; sickness, old age, and death are overcome.' In the state of *samadhi* (Absorption), the consciousness of separateness of subject and object disappears and the state of selflessness is reached. This is the supreme object of the philosophy of the Upanishads.

## V

THE German philosopher Schopenhauer declared that nothing is so beneficial and so elevating as the *Upanishads*, 'It has been the solace of my life; it will be the solace of my death.'

SCHELLING and his school used rapturous language about the teachings of the Upanishads. German writers wrote treatises on them. In India, Raja Rammohan Roy made the first translations into English and soon there were translations in the other languages of Europe. The Persian translation of Dara Shikoh was copied many times but it was printed for the first time in three volumes in 1910 and 1911 at Jaipur. It is now difficult to find copies of this edition. Dara Shikoh's version has a historical value; but more than that, it has inherent merits of its own. He produced his version with the help of the most learned pundits of the time, and his rendering of the ancient texts has a great deal of value in disentangling difficulties and unraveling the meaning of obscure passages.

THUS a powerful religious impulse, which drew its inspiration from Hindu as well as Muslim sources, spread all over India and sought to bring together the masses into a faith which transcended social, intellectual and communal barriers. This stirring in the Hindu society had its parallel in the Muslim community. We have seen that Sufism, even before its arrival in India, had absorbed the main

features of Vedanta, for instance the philosophy of absolute monism. The Indian *Advaita* had become the Muslim *Wahadat-al-Wujud*.

IBN-I-ARABI, the great master of Islamic mysticism, affirms that God is one and the universe is His reflection. Creation is a process of emanation of which the three steps are, (1) the stage of absolute unity (*ahdiyat*), (2) the stage of latent or potential multiplicity (*wahdat*), (3) the stage of apparent or actual multiplicity (*wahidiyat*). The multiplicity expresses itself in souls (*ruh*), forms (*mithal*) and bodies (*jism*).

FOR both Vedanta and Sufism, there is a common discipline. It includes purification of self, mastering of passions and desires, filling of the mind exclusively with the thought of God, obtaining control over bodily functions and mental processes till the objective world ceases to distract consciousness, till man passes away (*fana, nirvana*) from phenomenal existence and attains union with the divine. The soul stands self-enlightened and unperturbed by temptations and apprehensions.<sup>6</sup>

## VI

THE Sufis were held in high esteem among the masses who followed their simple teachings with eagerness and understanding. They laid stress upon the dignity of man, for they thought that every individual should reach the highest goal of human life by his own effort. They rejected the claim to special sanctity of priests, of books (scriptures of Hindus and Muslims), of temples and pilgrimages, of rites and ceremonies, and encouraged the establishment of direct relationship between man and God. The movement arose in the fifteenth century and continued until the end of the seventeenth.

THE leaders of this group hailed from all parts of India, but their teachings reflect the distinct influence of Islam. In the Hindi-speaking regions, the most notable reformer was Kabir, who was a powerful exponent of devotional faith centered on an impersonal, transcendental God. He was a fearless denouncer of hypocritical and superstitious

practices, Hindu or Muslim. Love of God and man was his religion and he accepted whatever he thought true in Hinduism and Islam. There were several other teachers whose point of view was similar to that of Kabir's, and who founded their orders in different parts of the country.

In Punjab, Guru Nanak founded the Sikh religion which was nourished by his nine successors. The last of them, Guru Govind Singh, transformed Sikhism into a military mission.

In Maharashtra, Namdeo, Eknath, Tukaram and Ramdas were noted saints who were hostile to idol worship, indifferent towards external acts of religion such as vows, fasts, austerities, pilgrimages, etc. They worshipped Vitthal, the one God who conferred tranquillity. They prayed for release from the snares of the illusory world and condemned caste distinctions, while seeking to reconcile Hindu and Muslim faiths.

BENGAL produced Chaitanya, who was a devotee of Krishna but at the same time opposed the Brahminical system of ritualism and caste. Among his disciples was Thakur Haridas, a Muslim. Sects in Bengal went far beyond Chaitanya in their criticism of Hindu orthodoxy, for example the Kartabhajas.

THE Virasaivas of Lingayats of the Kannada region were a sect which came into existence in the twelfth century, and rapidly spread in Mysore and the neighbouring districts. Their belief in one God who cannot be represented by images or propitiated by sacrifices, as well as their rejection of caste, show their independence from the conservative religious ways. They did not approve of sacrifices, fasts, feasts and pilgrimages, nor did they recognise distinctions based on birth. A pariah and a Brahmin were equal members of the sect.<sup>7</sup>

IN the deep South, the Tamil Siddhars rejected the theory of transmigration and the authority of the Shastras. They held that God and love are the same and desired mankind to live in peace recognising love as God.<sup>8</sup>

AMPLE and convincing evidence exists to show that all the higher thinkers and religious reformers among the Hindus, from the earliest times had proclaimed the unity of God, declared the equality of all devotees and placed the true faith above all religious rituals and ceremonies.<sup>9</sup> The works of the Adiyars (the Saiva Saints) and the Alvars (the Vaishnava saints) of South India during the period between the eighth and the twelfth centuries may be mentioned as cases in point. It was during this period that the Saiva and Vaishnava saints of South India endeavoured to wean the people from their allegiance to Buddhism and Jainism to Siva and Vishnu worship. The devotees of Siva and Vishnu developed the Bhakti cult. The preachers of the Bhakti cult put emphasis on the personal God, a unique, supreme, and merciful God, 'Surrender to whom and living in whose grace is the one way of attaining the life divine.'

MANY sects arose out of the conflict of Islam and Hinduism and tried to harmonize the two and to provide a common meeting ground for the devout men of both creeds in which their differences of rituals, dogmas and external marks of faith were ignored. According to Havell, the advent of Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya and Dadu was the result of such a development. These reformers won converts from Hindus and Muslims freely, and rejected the rigidities of the Brahmins and the *mullahs* alike. The Kabir-Panth (sect of Kabir) provided a connecting link between Hindu and Muslim mysticism. Kabir was against narrow communalism and the externals of the creeds. A Muslim by birth, Kabir was fundamentally monotheistic. He was first a Sufi and then an ardent disciple of Ramananda. Kabir's teaching touched the thinking souls of Hindus and Muslims, although, at the same time, it brought upon him the wrath of the orthodox pundits and *mullahs*.

GURU Nanak's first convert was a Muslim. Like Kabir, Nanak also decried idol-worship, caste prejudices and polytheism. This attitude brought him nearer Islam. He was influenced by Sufism, and the *Adi Granth* proves that the basis of his creed was essentially Indian.

His mission was the unification of Hinduism and Islam. He took the Prophet of Islam as his model and his teaching is an eloquent testimony to this fact. Dr. Tara Chand says that Nanak was more indebted to Islam than to Hinduism. But we know that his Hindu and Muslim disciples engaged in a great controversy over the disposal of his body; after his death the Hindus erected a shrine and the Muslims a tomb.<sup>10</sup>

THE cultural influence of the six centuries of Muslim rule was undoubtedly widespread. This influence was direct and vivid in literature, art, architecture, customs, manners, and in the general fashions of the age.

NOWHERE did the Hindus and Muslims come as close to each other and nowhere did they identify themselves with each other's culture so intimately as in Bengal. This resulted in the growth of a new culture popularly called Bengali culture which was different in many respects from the general pattern of Indo-Muslim culture of the other parts of the country. Under the patronage of the two illustrious Muslim dynasties, i.e., the Ilyas Shahi and the Husain Shahi, Bengali language and literature took a distinctive shape and style. Sanskrit epics were translated into Bengali and the Muslim poets enriched the literature by composing many ballads and mystic songs.

GROWING out of the Magadhi Apabhramsha, modern Bengali assumed the status of a standard language in the fourteenth century. During this period the entire country was waking to new religious heights. The keynote of this movement was the comprehension of the unity of God, and the belief that He can be attained through intense love. God views everyone equally, whether he is Brahmin or Chandal. Shri Chaitanya initiated the Krishna Bhakti movement. The Sufi movement in Bengal flourished through Jalaluddin Tabtezi. Shri Chaitanya had many Muslim followers who were Vaishnoi and had abundant poetic works to their credit.<sup>11</sup> The close interaction of Sufism and Chaitanyaism gave rise to Baul songs (1625-1675).<sup>12</sup> They were a creation of Hindu-Muslim unity. This was a movement

against all externalism whether of Hindus or of Muslims. It aimed to break all external restraints.

You wander aimlessly:  
Mandir, Mandir, Masjid, Masjid  
Oh, my teacher,  
What a headache it is  
The foolish, while weeping, look at me !

AMONG the Muslim saints whose contribution to the development of modern Bengali is recognized without question, is Daulat Kazi. Then there was Alaul, poet of a large number of Vaishnavite songs. His *Padmavati* is well reputed. Besides, he translated a large number of Persian books into Bengali. His *Vaishnava Padawalis* are very popular in Bengal. Another was Syed Sultan. Besides Vaishnavite songs, he has written books on Islamic religion, *Gyan Pradeep*, *Hazrat Mohammad Charit*, and *Nabi Bangash*. In *Nabi Bangash* he counted Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Shri Krishna as Nabis, and showed great respect towards them. Mohammed Khan wrote *Maut-ul-Hussain* (1645) and Hayat Mahmood wrote *Ambia Bani*. Sayed Murtaza was a poet of the first rank in Vaishnavite songs. Sabir Khan wrote *Vidya Sundar*. Ali Raza is known for his books, *Gyan Sagar*, *Saraj Koloop*, *Dhyani Mala*. He has depicted the love of Radha and Krishna, Ravan and Mandodari, and Yusuf and Zulaikha. His conclusion is that one rises from the love for a person to love for the entire creation and the Creator. A volume of Akbar Shah has been discovered. It is in praise of Lord Krishna.

A reference must be made to the Pathan rulers of Bengal like Sultan Nazir Shah (AD 1282-1325) and Sultan Hussain Shah, and their religious tolerance. They declared Bengali to be the official language of the regime. They got the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavat Purana* translated into Bengali. This is regarded as the first translation during these early days.<sup>13</sup> The great poet Vidyapati dedicated his poems to Sultan Nasiruddin. The Sultans were patrons of the Bengali language and tried to enrich it in many ways. According to S.R. Bhattacharya,

Shah Hussain patronized *Tarja Geet*.<sup>14</sup> It is considered the earliest form of Bengali Sufi poetry.

Up to the fourteenth century, Gujarati Apabhransha was spoken in Gujarat. Since Gujarat is situated on the western border of India, there was a direct interaction with people of Arabia and Persia. Many Gujarati saints and Sufis became famous. Among them names of Shaikh Ganjul Ilm (1391), Syed Berhamuddin (1411) and Shaikh Wajibuddin Gujarati are well known. One can see in Gujarati works like *Ramal Chand and Kath-Da-Prabandh* the mystic ideals of Vedantic Sufism.

KASHMIR and Persia had a long history of contacts even before Kashmir's political amalgamation in the Delhi Sultanate. The impact of Persia was direct. The Sufis loved the Kashmiri language and filled it with the romantic Sufi philosophy. Mahmood Ghani, Khwaja Habibullah Nowshgarwi and Nooruddin were the reputed Sufis of their times. In a Kashmiri *rubayi*, Shaikh Nooruddin says:

Don't yield before His bows  
 Don't turn your head if you are injured by the  
     thrust of His sword.  
 Accept willingly all the calamities that He  
     has sent to you.  
 Only then would you be honoured in this  
     world and after.

## VII

MUSIC has been another field to which the saints contributed generously. They came to realize that, like poetry, music also elevates emotion to the ecstatic state, necessary for union with God. Both the Chishtiya and the Qadria fraternities of Sufism, sanctioned *Sama* musical rhythms that enhanced the effect of poetry. They enabled the devotee to plunge into a state of trance called *Haal*. The effectiveness of *Sama* can be gauged by the fact that many Sufis embraced death while listening to certain poetic lines which intensely affected their

hearts. It is said that Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki surrendered his life while hearing the following lines:

*Kushtagan-e-khanjar-e-taslim ra  
Har zamana ghaib jane digarast.*

(To those who have been killed by the dagger  
of submission,

There comes new life every moment from the  
unseen world.)

LONG before Europe had learnt to study religion with a scientific and detached spirit, many Muslim learned men had compiled books of comparative religion in which they displayed an amazingly free and rationalistic attitude of mind. Among them was the most eminent scholar Al-Behan Al Biruni who compiled a comprehensive treatise on Hindu religion and philosophy as early as the eleventh century.<sup>15</sup>

THROUGHOUT the middle ages, Muslims took enormous pains to acquaint themselves with the religious literature of the Hindus. They translated almost all important texts into Persian—the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Dharma Sastra*, *Puranas*, the *Yoga Vasistha*, the *Yogasastra*, *Vedanta Sastra*, etc.<sup>16</sup>

AMONG later writers was Mazhar Jan-e-Janan (b. 1699). Mazhar wrote about the Hindu worship of idols:

The process is similar to the Dhikr, contemplative ritual, which is prescribed for Muslim Sufis.<sup>17</sup>

MAHMUD Shabistari (AD 1317), the well-known writer of *Gulshan-i-Raz*, writing on the theme of idol worship, explains the difference and similarity between it and Islam:

The idol is the expression of love and unity in this world, and to wear the sacred thread is to take the resolve of service. As both faith and unfaith are founded in existence, unity of God is the essence of idol worship. As things are the expression of existence, one out of them must at least be the idol.

If the Muslim knew what the idol is, then he would understand that religion consists in idolatry. And if the idol worshipper understood the idol, he would not go astray in his faith. The latter did not see in the idol anything but external creation, and for this reason he became *kafir* in the eye of the law. If thou too would not see that reality is hidden in the idol thou wilt also be not known as a Muslim according to the law.<sup>18</sup>

ISLAMIC mysticism originated and grew in two regions of the Muslim world; ancient Khorasan and Mesopotamia. In both these regions, seekers of truth and enlightenment among the Muslims came into close contact with Indian mystics. All Khorasan was studded with Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples at the time of the Muslim conquest, as is testified by Hiuen Tsiang who had passed through these lands barely seventy years earlier. Damascus, and Baghdad were centres of learning, where Hindu scholars taught Indian science and Hindu ascetics (yogis) held debates with Muslim scholars. The Pramukhas of the Nava Vihara of Transoxiana became the prime ministers (Baramakas) of the Abbasid Caliphs and they invited Hindu doctors, astronomers and scientists to Baghdad and encouraged the translation of Sanskrit treatises into Arabic. Thus the philosophy of pantheism and the practical discipline of Yoga passed into the Sufi circles of the Middle East.<sup>19</sup>

## VIII

THE spirit of Bhakti moved across the country from one end to the other. As Priyadas points out in his *Bhaktirasabodhini*,

The tree of Bhakti was once but a sapling... now it has climbed to the sky with its glory spread over the earth... Once but a feeble thing, it now contentedly sways the mighty elephants of the passions.<sup>20</sup>

It was in schools of Bhakti that the doctrines of mystic practices were developed. It was there that the differentiation of the stages of

progress towards unification with God, of the emotions which accompanied them, the causes that excited and enhanced the emotional states, and psychic conditions which followed them, were expounded.

THE process of training in devotion implied worship of the Adorable One, sorrow for one's sins, doubt about all objects other than He, celebration of His praise, living for His sake, assigning everything to Him, resignation to His will, seeing Him in all things, renouncing anger, envy, greed and impure thoughts.<sup>21</sup>

THESE states of emotions and processes bear comparison with what the Muslim Sufis taught in regard to *hal* and *muqam* (states of rapture and stages of ecstasy). For instance, Abu Nasr al-Sarraj, the author of the oldest treatises on Sufism, recounts the seven stages, namely,

- repentance
- abstinence
- renunciation
- poverty
- patience
- trust in God
- satisfaction;

and the ten psychic states, namely,

- meditation
- nearness to God
- love
- fear
- hope
- longing
- intimacy
- tranquillity
- contemplation
- certainty.

APART from the founders of the four Sampradayas, Ramanuja, Madhva, Vishnuswami and Nimbaditya, who composed their religious treatises in Sanskrit, and the propagators of Vaishnavite Bhakti of the schools of Rama and Krishna, who appealed to the conservative minded among the general public, there was a third group of mystics who employed the language of the people to preach their radical creeds. Their movement represents the urge of the unprivileged masses to uplift themselves. Some of them were persecuted by government and some incurred social censure. But they were held in high esteem by the masses.

THE mediaeval Bhakti movement, starting from the south and permeating the entire northern India in the course of two centuries more than deified the human body. The body which was coveted by the gods because through it alone can a human relationship be established between men and the Universal Being. The entire concept of body as a product of original sin is wiped out by a total involvement of man to the limit of offering the vilest and darkest corner of his mind to Him so that he cannot refuse this offer and:

When space herself goes naked  
 Where is the apparel to cover the  
     cosmic shame ?  
 When the salt of the earth  
 Thy own, my lord, take the taints of  
     the world.  
 Where is corruption's adequate image ?

THIS was certainly a big leap from the image of Purushottama, the *dhirodatta* hero, the hero whom even the gods feared. Even the earlier image of the epic hero was of one whom even the gods feared not because of his physical valour but because of his overpowering compassion. The highest virtue according to Yudhishtira, the Mahabharata hero, is *anrisansya* (compassion for all foe and friend alike). The Bhakti value is a leap forward in the sense that it impregnates the lowliest of the lowly with the seed of the greatness of the great. It transcends hierarchies of caste, class, creed, age and personal

achievements. It realizes this sublime truth that final emancipation of oneself has no meaning at all if you cannot of your own accord choose to dispel the darkness enveloping human beings around you. The ideal of the saint is beautifully summed in these lines :

For us all towns are one, all men our kin; life's good comes not from others' gift, nor ill; man's pains and pains' relief are from within; Death is not a new thing. Nor do our bosoms thrill when joyous life seems like a luscious draught. When grieved, we patiently suffer. We deem this much-praised life of ours a fragile raft borne down the waters of some mountain stream.

THIS search of the Sufi becomes the cherishable ideal of the medieval Sufi literature. This search is not a negative ideal; it is a search for joy in day-to-day life. No part of the day is dull, no activity is despicable, no pain unbearable and no moment unenjoyable, because everything becomes surcharged with a deeper significance.

IF humanity is to be brought together, it is only on the basis of mutual understanding, especially in matters of fundamental belief as preached by the votaries of Sufism. The philosophical understanding of the nature of ultimate reality and the practice of love, irrespective of the distinction of caste, creed, community and nationality, these are the basic assumptions of Sufism.

SAYS Rumi:

By loving wisdom doth the soul know life.  
What has it got to do with senseless strife of  
Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Arab, Turk?

THE *Shrimad Bhagwat* has also laid stress on this essential unity of universal Truth in the following words:

In varying ways the sages have described  
The same unvarying and essential truths,  
There is no real conflict 'twixt them all,  
The knowers know the way to reconcile.  
Many the words and ways in which the wise

Have tried to teach one truth to all mankind.  
 Each way, each word, is right in its own place.  
 There is no conflict 'twixt them all.  
 The sages see and say the same in each.

If we make a comparative study of the scriptures, we shall notice that the basic truths are the same in every case. Some of the stories and a good many of their expressions and passages appear so similar as to create an impression that these scriptures have proceeded from one common source. They appear as branches proceedings from one and the same trunk, each in its own place and in its own time offering cooling shade to many weary way-farers.

THE Quran says:<sup>22</sup>

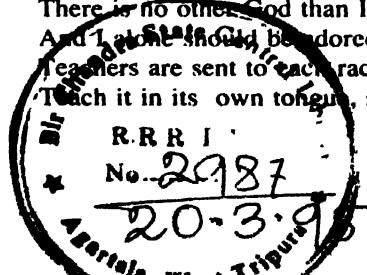
There must be no compulsion exercised.  
 In matters of religion. Unto you  
 Your faith be welcome, so my faith to me.

REGARDING respect for all religions, the Quran says:

We believe in what hath been revealed to us and  
 revealed to you. Our God and your God is one and to  
 Him are we self-surrendered.

REGARDING basic oneness of all religions the Quran states:

This that I am now uttering unto you  
 The Holy Quran, it is to be found  
 Within the ancient seers' writing too  
 For teachers have been sent to every race  
 Of human beings. No community  
 Is left without a warner and a guide  
 And aught of difference we do not make  
 For disagreement there is none 'twixt them,  
 Between these Prophets. All that have been sent,  
 Have been so sent but one truth to proclaim  
 I, verily the I all-one, am God  
 There is no other God than I,  
 And I alone should be adored by all.  
 Teachers are sent to each race that they may  
 Teach it in its own tongue, so there may be



No doubt as to the meaning in its mind.  
An Arabic Quran is thus revealed,  
That Mecca and the cities around may learn  
With ease the truth put in the words they know.  
For had we made them in a foreign tongue  
They surely would have made objections thus  
Why have not these revelations been made clear ?

MAULANA Abul Kalam Azad states that the obvious significance of this remarkable text is that the essentials are common to all religions; that truth is universal, and not the monopoly of any one race or teacher, that non-essentials vary with time, place and circumstances, that the same fundamental truths have been revealed by God in different scriptures, in different languages, through different teachers, in different nations. The Quran gives the positive counsel:

Let all of us ascend towards, and meet  
Together on the common ground of those  
High truths and principles which we all hold.  
Verily, all who faithfully believe  
In God, and Day of judgement, and do good,  
Be they Jews, Christians, Sabians or Muslims,  
They shall have their reward from the Lord God.  
There is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.  
We do believe that which has been revealed  
To us, and also what has been revealed  
To You, Your God and our God is one.  
For sure, and unto Him we both submit.

ACCORDING TO Maulana Azad, the Quran assures us that Islam is not new. God revealed it in earlier times to peoples of other countries through Prophets sent to them. Hence this religion is eternal (*sanatan*) and immutable. It was declared through the messengers of God, as stated in many verses of the Quran. This faith is common to all the people of the world, for truth is one and ever abiding. The need for revealing it, again, through Mohammad, arose because the people to whom it was previously revealed had corrupted it. They had deviated from the truth of the oneness of God, a truth which must be followed

in thought, word, and deed, and not merely repeated by word of mouth.

Maulana Azad further stresses that besides this faith (*din*), the Quran lays down the law (*shara*), which is the external form of the faith, and which regulates man's conduct and prescribes the standards of action. But the law is relative to time and place. It varies according to the social circumstances and the mental capability of a people. In the matter of ritual and worship, therefore, people follow different ways, and the Quran recommends that there ought to be no ground for dispute regarding such matters. The Quran expressly states that God has made for every group or nation a different law and standard. If God wished He could have made one law for all.

In his *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* Maulana Azad says:

The principle underlying faith in God (*Din-i-Ilahi*) is brotherhood and unity of the human race, not difference and hatred. All the prophets of God who appeared on earth gave the same lesson, i.e. all human beings are one people, and the Supporter of all of them is one God.

He writes further,

God wishes to establish this truth in the mind of everyone, that differences in thought and action are national characteristics of the human race. These differences are present in every aspect of life, including religion. It is not, therefore, proper to consider these differences as the yardstick for truth and falsehood.

and,

The way of belief is to accept the truth of all the prophets and not to deny any one of them. The way of disbelief is to deny any one or all of them.

In conversations with Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi, Azad had stated:

Hadith cannot be the source of law for the whole of human society. The Quran is responsible for universal guidance, but the Quran contains only a limited number of laws. The reason is that no code of laws can apply to the entire world because of differences in times and conditions. Nor can such a code be useful. This explains why the authority to suspend the operation of the authoritative laws of the Quran has been entrusted to the Imam of the Muslims. For example, *Ahl-i-Hadith* amended the law of divorce and prohibited severance of the hand of a thief.

The Quran teaches that all religions are, in essence, identical however much they may have drifted from their original purity. The Muslims are required to show equal reverence to all the Prophets and the Books that came before the advent of Mohammad and the Quran. Islam brings peace to the world and not the sword. It expressly prohibits the use of force in propagating religion and does not approve disrespect to the places of worship of the non-Muslims.

The world as we see today is on the threshold of a new era. On the one hand, there is the strange contrast between the appalling poverty and destitution of the third world countries caused by ignorance, illiteracy and massive backwardness and the material affluence and prosperity of the developed countries coupled with loss of faith in basic human values, emergence of an atomised existence, disintegration of family-life and breakdown of social institutions. As science and technology rapidly advance and we march on to the 21st century, mankind is torn by strife, haunted by the spectre of war, and its vision blurred by the clouds of distrust, suspicion and hatred. Narrow and artificial barriers based on parochialism, casteism, communalism and religious fundamentalism divide mankind and the impregnable fortress, raised by them gets stronger day by day. As we talk of peace and nuclear disarmament and organise one world summit after another, we go on stockpiling nuclear weapons

capable of reducing in no time the mother earth with its beautiful flora and fauna into a few handfuls of dust. Having outdistanced time and space, men and women today are undoubtedly able to fly like birds in the air and swim in the ocean like fish but they remain insensitive to the sight of misery, deprivation and suffering of their most immediate neighbour, to the cry of physical and mental anguish of those unfortunate sections of society who have been victims of social discrimination and economic exploitation. The immortal lines of *Ishavasyopanishad* ring in their ears but do not strike at their core. There is nothing new in these lines; they are the continuation of a rich legacy and an integral part of ancient oriental thought and culture. That we are all children of mother earth and that this fact holds the key to an understanding of the basic and essential unity of the human race has been forcefully brought out by Sufis and saints like Maulana Rumi, Hallaj, Sarmad, Shams Tabrez, Chishti, Nizamuddin Aulia, Baba Farid, Kabir, Dadu, Chaitanya, and Tukaram etc. Some of them laid down their lives for their message of love and oneness.

THIS essential unity of mankind reverberated itself many years later through the most lyrical composition of Poet Rabindranath Tagore in the following lines:

Arise and awake,  
O my consciousness  
On this sacred land,  
On the bank of this great sea of humanity.  
That is India.  
Nobody knows.  
At whose behest  
How many streams of men and women  
Came here like gushing streams,  
How many of them submerged themselves  
In this ocean.  
Into this land  
Came the Aryans, the non-Aryans, the  
Dravidians and the Chinese,  
The Huns, the Sakas, the Pathans and the Moghuls.

And lost their identity in one being.  
They came through mountain passes, through deserts,  
Amidst pitched battles and rivers of blood.  
They came singing their glory,  
Proud and boisterous,  
But finally they merged themselves amidst us,  
Their sound and fury  
Got merged with our being.

THIS essential unity of India has manifested itself in a beautiful synthesis of music and dance, drama and painting, literary and philosophical discourses which are also indicative of the rich and varied Indian panorama. Love of humanity is the key to the understanding of that essential unity. Maulana Rumi, the jewel of the Sufi poets, perceived the same unity in Islam like the poet of Upanishads. In his words,

O love ! You are my greatest stimulator; you are the medicine for all my ailments. You are the true friend, philosopher and guide of my soul and you are like Hakeem Jaalinus. You are the surest remedy for my vanity and pride. My being has adored the Vedas and temples of Hindus, the Zendavesta of Parsis, the Quran of the Muslims, the Enjeels of the Christians and the Atishkada of the Parsis. There is no second God for me other than love.'

THIS is the essence of Sufism.

### ***Notes and References***

1. *Brhadaranyaka*, 3.4.2.
2. *Chandogya*, 7.24.1.
3. *Brhadaranyaka*, 1.5.23.
4. *Mundaka*, 3.1.8.
5. *Brhadaranyaka*, 11.4.5.

- 6 Tarachand *Society and the State in the Mughal period* 1960 p 92
- 7 ibid p 92
- 8 ibid p 93
- 9 Jadunath Sarkar *Hindu Muslim Relations in Mediaeval Bengal* p 49
- 10 Tarachand op cit 169
- 11 Inamul Haq *Muslim Bangla Literature*
- 12 Sri Kumar Sen *Islam Bangla*
- 13 Nazar Zakir *Brief History of Bangla Literature*
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- 15 Nazar Zakir *Brief History of Bangla Literature*
- 16 Tarachand *The Hindu Muslim Problem* pp 34 35
- 17 ibid p 35
- 18 ibid p 36
- 19 ibid p 37
- 20 Tarachand *Society and State in the Mughal Period* p 87
- 21 ibid pp 90 91 also Privadas *Bhakti Rasabodhini* p 89
- 22 Translation of Quranic verses have been taken from *Essential Unity of all Religions* by Dr Bhagwandas Theosophical Publishing House Adyar Madras 1955 and Basic Oneness of all Religions in Form and Essence Sir Syed Memorial Lectures by B N Pande Monograph pub by Sir Syed Memorial Society Aligarh 1987 .

# The Philosophical and the Mystical Perspective of Existence with Special Reference to Maulana Azad

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Syed Vahiduddin

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PHILOSOPHY, mysticism and religion have developed different relationships with each other in the Eastern and the Western traditions. In the East they have intermingled so closely that it is only by a conceptual effort that we can distinguish them. In the Western and Islamic context, their relationship has been ambivalent. Philosophy and mysticism in the West, to take them first, are often brought into such a sharp contrast that to call a view purported to be philosophical, as mystical, is to veto outright its philosophical claim to validity. Kant, the philosopher of categorical imperative, regarded with strong distavour mystic ecstasy, which he branded as enthusiasm, as it tended to affect adversely moral earnestness. Hegel assigned to philosophy a higher place, than art and religion and found no place for mysticism in his philosophy. He ridiculed the view that 'feeling' and 'intuition' (*Ansehauung*) could ever have a cognitive value. But among the post-Kantian thinkers Fichte and Schelling, especially the latter, responded positively to the great German mystics of the past like Eckhart and Boehme. Schopenhauer sought refuge in the Upanishads. To go back to the classical period of Greek

philosophy, we find in Plato and later in Plotinus deep mystical strains from which mystics of all times have drawn inspiration. And in most recent times, no less a perceptive student of mysticism than William James, freely acknowledged the relevance of mysticism for a full account of reality. He wrote, 'I repeat once more, the existence of mystical states absolutely overthrows the pretensions of non-mystical states to be the sole and ultimate dictators of what we may believe.'<sup>1</sup>

WHEN we try to understand religion in relationship to mysticism we are in an area which does not permit a clear answer. The mystics, whether Muslim or Christian, have always remained subjected to suspicion, their views are often dubbed heretical. They were exposed to persecution and some of them had to pay with their life. It should be assumed that orthodox fears and suspicions have been without foundation. With their visionary experiences and emotional exuberance they are likely to fall prey to deceptive intimations, however elevated their rank might be (Q 22:52). The Muslim Sufis were wise enough to adhere strictly to the Sharia so as to effectively preserve moral sanity and prevent the antinomian tendencies which have threatened the mystics of all times.

WHETHER it is philosophy, mysticism or religion, they have developed varied accents in their historical manifestation. They are far from being homogenous and uniform in their overt expression. Philosophy as an open inquiry cannot but allow alternative interpretations of reality, and it will be difficult to point to any conclusion in philosophy as conclusive. Every answer to a question leads to another question and thus the history of philosophy goes on. Though philosophy is supposed to be rational in its intention, the limits of pure reason, or limits of rationality soon become obvious. Kant's critique is really an attempt at self-evaluation on the part of philosophy. When it is a question of mysticism, we discover great confusion. If by mysticism we mean the recognition of a non-rational source of knowledge and immediate contact with reality through intuition, it

is still bound to give expression to its alleged experiences in terms which are intelligible. This means that it cannot make itself credible without resorting to rational categories, however ineffable the original experience might seem to be.

ANY attempt to throw light on the relation of mysticism to religion, bristles with difficulties. All great religions have a mystic dimension not only in their historical development but even in their existential roots, denied though it may have been by the legalistically oriented spokesmen. The protestant theologian Paul Tillich has spoken of religion as the depth dimension of man's experience. We may go a step forward and assert that even in religion as a historical manifestation we may do well to distinguish the surface dimension from its depth dimension which is often obscured by its surface view. Consequently, we can say that mysticism is the depth dimension of religion and has surfaced in all world religions. It is again to be distinguished in its two aspects, one doctrinaire and the other experiential. Conflicts and tensions grow when the mystics try to conceptualise them and develop them into a theosophical system. Their doctrinaire claims became suspect and their claim to non-rational source of knowledge which is variously called 'intuition' or 'illumination', *ilham* in the Islamic context, is sharply distinguished from the prophetic revelation. Some philosophers, in spite of their basic disagreement have made pronouncements perilously close to mysticism. Spinoza, though a rationalist to the core, ultimately resorts to intuition. And his idea of the infinite divine attributes, only two of which are accessible to knowledge, breathes of mystic perception, rather than of rational apprehension. Bergson is the philosopher who is most vocal in his crusade against rationalism, although he cannot help elaborate rational arguments to combat rationalism and to deny the credibility of the intellect in the apprehension of reality.

OUR appreciation of mystical consciousness requires proper understanding of the existential roots of man. Man is distinguished from other creatures in his feeling of loneliness. Since Aristotle, we

are accustomed to defining man as a social animal, although man alone is lonely in a manner in which no other animal is. Quran is alert to his loneliness when it quietly declares that man is created lonely (Q. 74:11). However much he may try to overcome it through diversions, the feeling of loneliness cannot leave him. Bertrand Russell, the 'passionate sceptic', was driven to the edge of religion by the over-bearing feeling of loneliness, and sought escape in what he calls ecstasies of love and sex. He says, 'The loneliness of the human soul is unendurable, nothing can penetrate it except the highest intensity of the sort of love that religious teachers have preached.' And again, 'I find myself involved in a vast mist of solitude both emotional and metaphysical, from which I can find no issue.'<sup>2</sup>

FROM general reflections let us now proceed to specific questions relevant to our main concern. All the three religions of the Abrahamic tradition have witnessed tensions and suspicions between doctrinaire orthodoxy and philosophy as a rational pursuit. The great Jewish philosopher Spinoza had to face excommunication because of his concept of God, though ironically enough he was called 'God intoxicated' by the German Romantics. The philosophers of Islam had to face the charge of heresy, for their metaphysical conclusions seemed to deviate from the established orthodox position on the destiny of man and seemed to have been moulded under the influence of the Greek thought. Their understanding of philosophy, however, was developed not as unadulterated Aristotelian teaching but as it was shaped by the infiltration of Neoplatonic thought. Al-Ghazzali's crusade is not really levelled against philosophy as a discipline, but against certain conclusions of the philosophers. Anyhow, his critique is as much a part of philosophy as anything else. If he argues against philosophy, philosophically he is really contributing to the development of a way of thought which he was supposed to destroy. Now, by doing just this Ghazzali has created a niche for himself in the History of Philosophy. As regards the relationship of philosophy to mysticism, we do not find it negative in any way. Abu Ali Sina seemed to have corresponded extensively with the eminent Sufi, Abu Said Abul

Khayr and yet he is projected as a model of rationality. His later works show strong mystical tendency and Abu Said Abul Khayr remarked, 'What he knows I see.' In other words, the knowledge of the mystic is immediate perception unmediated by thought. Another interesting story is handed down to us about the meeting of Ibn Rushd with the great Shaikh Ibn-i-Arabi. In the post-Ghazzalian development of Islamic thought in Iran, philosophy and mysticism seems to have come very close.<sup>3</sup>

WHEN we probe into the relationship of mysticism to religion in the context of Islam, we encounter a peculiar sort of ambivalence which has continued down the ages to the recent past. Sufism has not found favour with influential schools of Muslim Theology and the visionary experiences of the Sufis have been branded devil's delusions. If this is so, it is difficult to understand the commitment of deeply pious souls to Sufism. Some of them, firmly entrenched though they were in orthodoxy, made greatly moving utterances of ecstatic frenzy. Khwaja Abdullah Ansari of Herat (1006-1088) was one of them.

THE two towering personalities of our country who are supposed to represent Islamic ethos at its best are Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Allama Iqbal. The ambivalence we are talking about stares us in the face in their different pronouncements on Sufism. Of the two, Iqbal has aired them more freely in poetry and with philosophical restraint in his lectures. Taking Rumi, a Sufi of the purest waters, as his guide he has transformed him in his own image and projected him as the embodiment of the dynamism of Islam. Central to the critique of the Allama, is the distinction that he draws between the mystic and the prophetic consciousness. He writes, 'The mystic does not wish to return from the repose of unitary experience, and even when he does return, as he must, his return does not mean much for mankind at large. The prophet's return is creative. He returns to insert himself into the sweep of time with a view to controlling the forces of history, and thereby, creating a fresh world of ideals. For the

mystic, the repose of unitary experience is something final, for the prophet, it is the awakening within him, of world-shaking psychological forces calculated to completely transform the human world.<sup>4</sup> But the way Iqbal tries to demarcate the prophetic and mystic consciousness has only a limited validity. Sufism, to confine ourselves to the Islamic dimension, has not been all that exclusively contemplative. Some of the Sufis, quite averse to the quietist response, involved themselves in political activity and even led revolts. In other words, they were imbued with prophetic pathos. Najmuddin Kubra died fighting with the Mongols. Remarkably enough, Iqbal observes a little further in the same lecture, that 'A prophet may be defined as a type of mystic consciousness in which unitary experience tends to overflow the boundaries and seeks opportunities of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life.' And Rumi, whom Iqbal takes his guide, stands really at the crossroads of the mystic and prophetic consciousness as Iqbal understands it.<sup>5</sup>

IN Maulana Azad, we find an affiliation with seemingly conflicting trends of thought. First of all he was a Muslim *alim* who had to satisfy the requirements of an established tradition. He was the spokesman of a political party with an out-and-out secular commitment and, in addition, he had his roots in the Sufi tradition which he could not suppress and which could not help but surface occasionally. Maulana Azad's perception of mysticism in relation to philosophy is best seen in the illuminating introduction that he wrote for the *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western* which was planned on his own initiative and published by the Government of India. He wrote: 'The earliest Indian philosophy is to be found in the distinct mystic and religious tone of the Upanishads. This should not lead us to the erroneous conclusion of Zeller and Erdmann, that early Indian philosophy should be excluded from an account of empirical or rational philosophy. It is true that so long as mysticism is the experience of an individual, we cannot apply it to the test of empirical enquiry. But, when an attempt is made to build up a logical system of speculation on the basis of such an experience, it must not only be

included within the province of philosophy but may well constitute an important part of it.' His perception of philosophy speaks eloquently of his realisation that be it philosophy, religion or mysticism, they do not stand in a vacuum but stand at the cross-currents of different traditions and it is the duty of the succeeding generations to assimilate them all creatively. With his roots in Islam, conversant with the spiritual trends of his native soil, and alert to the winds of doctrines coming from the West, his intention must have been to develop what he called a synoptic outlook, though his political commitment and deep involvement in the national struggle did not allow him to evolve a fully consistent philosophical perspective. Azad's views cannot really be defined by any one of his writings, and the most scholarly may not be as representative as his relatively neglected ones. His *Tarjumah* ..., for example, is the most appreciated and will always call to mind Azad's deep scholarship and his deep concern for introducing Islam to the world in a way which satisfies the present day intellectual need and illuminates its response to modern challenges. But, if we wish to find in it Azad's affiliation to Sufism, we will be disappointed. Its main concern was to project its meaning to the modern intellectual and for this purpose nothing better could have been chosen than to develop Quranic thesis by an elucidation of the opening Surah. It is here that God is projected in his cosmic relevance. Of all His attributes priority is given to the quality of His mercy, His justice being tempered by mercy, and the straight path that is pointed to is not a path which is new, but followed by His chosen ones earlier. It served the main concern which was to project the Quranic humanism not stripped of transcendence but as embedded in it. All great works, especially religious, have different layers and apart from their main currents which are immediately visible, they have undercurrents which will always remain challenges 'for those who reflect'. The Maulana has studiously by-passed the mystic overtones and philosophical issues and concentrated on pragmatic concerns, and rightly so. The kind of man that Quran builds and the kind of life that man is enjoined to follow, to follow virtue (maruf) and eschew evil (munkar)

have been well expressed. But when it comes to questions which have continued to worry and bewilder thinking minds, as those about the nature of human freedom in relation to divine omnipotence, and the kinds of arguments which lead to the idea of divinity, and the kind of life which can be envisaged beyond the grave, are discussed in a popular, albeit scholarly framework, but hardly to satisfy a philosophical critic. Needless to say, I am not saying this in a spirit of criticism but rather to justify his refusal to involve himself in discussions which would not lead to any conclusion but instead would hinder the reader from apprehending basic Quranic concerns which are immediately relevant to his life.

THE difficulty with the Muslim exegete is that he is called upon to clarify problems which by their nature cannot be clarified. They carry us instead into the midst of a dialectic which cannot be resolved logically but has to be mediated upon. The shift from one position to another does not negate either but allows each a place in its own right.

IF we wish to discover Maulana Azad's kinship with the Sufi mind we will have to move beyond the confines of the *Tarjuman* and follow closely, sometimes explicitly and sometimes between the lines, Azad's mystic pathos. A great scripture revered as the word of God by millions and meditated upon by the deeply pious souls cannot be expected to exhaust itself in one viewpoint but reveals itself differently to different levels of sensitivity. If it is true of great achievements of secular literature, it must be even more true of sacred literature. That God is called the First and Last, the Light of Heaven and Earth, the Overseer who sees all but whom none can see, called many different names and yet remains the anonymous. He (hu) who transcends all that is named, may well give rise to sterile scholastic speculation as well as to bewilderment (*haira*). Allama Iqbal's categorical declaration that the Quran emphasizes deed rather than idea is true, yet it is not the whole truth. The sacred book is rich in contemplative moments and some of its basic intentions are not action-oriented. The priority given to *Zikr*, the importance attached to

night vigils, as well as a number of ideas like that of *amana*, *mithaq*, *miraj* have such mystic and non-rational antecedents that they can only be meditated upon as has been done by the Sufis but hardly lend themselves to any conceptual understanding. With Maulana Azad also issues of current relevance and moral concerns of a humanistic ideology get the upper hand, and he sedulously fights shy of Sufi perspective and scholastic hair-splitting. Small wonder if he has safely found refuge in the appreciation of the Quran as it was understood by 'the first generation of the Muslims'. He is motivated pragmatically in bringing the sacred scripture close to the modern mind by explaining the universality of the Quranic message and laying special stress on the transcendental unity of religions. It must be conceded that the Quranic message is multidimensional and the interpreter can easily choose any one of its dimensions and project it as the dominant one, leaving everything else as peripheral.

It is worthwhile to give consideration to another, though no less important aspect, of his genius, the mystic awareness. Azad's essay on the ecstatic and rather unconventional Sufi, Sarmad cannot be dismissed as born of youthful exuberance but as revealing a marked trait in Azad's own thinking which did not become prominent, but found expression in subdued accents.<sup>6</sup> His letter to Abdur Rahman Kashmiri bears testimony to his innermost feelings and his abiding concerns. Here he declares without mincing words that the conclusion he has been led to in his long search for truth is that the final assurance and spiritual realisation can be reached without immediate experience, which he calls *Zauq* (taste) in the parlance of the Sufis. And in the *Tazkirah* he graphically describes the shifting states of his restless soul, now swayed by ambition, now awakened to a sense of humility by the observation of nature in its varied manifestations. The most remarkable phase of his early life is the time when he was almost carried away by the tumult of the senses, 'And lo! At once the grace of God appeared in the form of profane love.' But again it was His gracious concern which did not allow him to tarry long in this stage. Needless to say, if he had tarried much longer, it would not

have made any difference. He rightly points out, in keeping with the Sufi tradition, that the nearest way to sacred love is through profane love. Anyhow Maulana believes that he passed through profane love only to go beyond it soon after.

THERE are certain features of his character which seem to militate against the Sufi temperament and it will not be difficult for a critic to dwell on them and consider them as the dominant traits which ruled his public life. A critic may well point out his preoccupation with himself, his 'egotism', and his attempt to maintain his self-image. Yet he cannot ignore the deeper levels of his character which left an indelible mark on his close friends and colleagues, his sublime restraint all his life, vis à vis his detractors. The letter that he wrote in response to the strictures he was subjected to, is a remarkable piece of self-effacement and self depreciation and shows clearly that the man as he appeared to the outsiders and on the platform, had within him, concealed, the awareness of his inadequacies, a trait truly representative of Sufi sentiment. If one could say that he integrated contradictory perspectives, responding positively to each, to Ibn Taimiya and Shah Waliullah, as to ecstatic Sufis, this was because his was an open mind in a much deeper sense than it is understood in our profane context, open to the scared in all its elusiveness and to human experience in all its waywardness.

IN conclusion we may say that Maulana Azad reflected in his person a life style in which aesthetic and mystical elements were inextricably blended. His unqualified abandon to the sound of music, his dedication to poetry, his imaginative appreciation of nature, were inbuilt components of his life, whereas his role as an *alim* and a political activist was peripheral in comparison. This is not to deny his meaningful response to the challenge of his time, and unwavering allegiance to the causes which he cherished, but to highlight an aspect of his life which is apt to be overshadowed by controversies and debates. However Azad will be remembered not as he was in his authenticity and intimacy, a lonely and anguished soul in whose privacy no one could intrude, but as he appeared to the public gaze as

a Muslim scholar of wide sympathies and a national luminary of high standing.

### **Notes and References**

- 1 As quoted by G W M Tyrell, *Human Personality*, 1954
- 2 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, George Allen and Unwin, 1987 Pages 146 and 160
- 3 Henry Corbin's account in *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn-e-Arabi*, Princeton, 1969
- 4 Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* p 124
- 5 ibid
- 6 T H Douglas *Abul Kalam Azad An Intellectual and Religious Biography* Christian W Troll's Comments, O U P 1988 □



# Some Remarks about the Role of the Quran in Ibn Arabi's Writings

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Michel Chodkiewicz

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THE geographical dispersion of the influence of Ibn Arabi's works throughout the Muslim world is well known. Less well known is the depth of that influence across the strata of Muslim society. Ibn Arabi's writings represent thousands of pages. His doctrine is a subtle and complex one and it is expressed in a language that is often cryptic and paradoxical. Besides, for more than seven centuries, it has been - and still is - denounced as impious and heretical.<sup>1</sup> Logically, access to Ibn Arabi's teachings would thus seem to be reserved to restricted groups of literati who are intimidated neither by the obscurities of the enormous Akbarian corpus nor by the *fatwas* of the *fujaha*. Such is not the case: the imprint of Ibn Arabi's doctrine is to be found not only in 'intellectual' Sufism but also in much broader forms of religious life, as evidenced by the wide circulation in popular brotherhoods of technical terms and notions having their origin in the writings of the Shaikh al-Akbar. This is all the more surprising when one looks at the writings of his adversaries.

AMONG the main criticisms against Ibn Arabi as they are to be

found, for example, in of works Ibn Taymiyya, Husain bin al-Ahdal, Burhanuddin al-Buqai, or Sakhawi.<sup>2</sup> there are, of course, many well-known *topoi* of heresiographical literature: he is accused of *zandaqa*, of *ibaha* and so on. From an Islamic point of view, however, the most serious charge against him is that of *tahrif maani al-Quran*. According to his adversaries, and to many Western specialists as well, Ibn Arabi is not a genuine Sufi : he is really a philosopher and, to quote the late Abul-Ala Afifi, in order to put a religious disguise on his true intent, 'He interprets the Quran in such a way as to fit in with his pantheistic doctrine even at the cost of violating its language and grammar.' I am dealing at length with this problem in a forthcoming book,<sup>3</sup> where I hope to demonstrate that, the most profound Akbarian exegesis is always based upon the most literal reading of the Quran. But what I would like to do in this paper is quite another thing. I intend to show you that there is, between the writings of Ibn Arabi and the Holy Book, another kind of relationship which unfortunately remains hidden from most readers.

By doing that, I am not at all trying to prove the orthodoxy of Ibn Arabi's teachings. Everything and its contrary has already been said for many centuries about that, and I have nothing to add on the subject - but only to establish that, whatever you may think on this controversial matter, it is impossible to understand his works without keeping in mind that-even when there is not a direct quotation or an obvious reference to Quranic, verses – the Quran is always present in everything he writes.

THE *Fusus al-Hikam* is a comparatively short work and one which in a very compact form of expression, brings together the great themes of Ibn Arabi's metaphysics; as a result it has been the favourite target for the polemics that have violently denounced him and his school from the time of Ibn Taymiyya down to the present day. For identical reasons the *Fusus* is the work which has most often been commented on by the direct and indirect disciples of the Shaikh al-Akbar. Very naturally it is also the text which has as a rule benefited the most from the attention of Western specialists.

However, I for my part, wish to address myself chiefly in the following remarks to the *Futuhat Makkiyya*.<sup>4</sup> It will be remembered that the second draft of this *summa* was completed only two years before its author's death. We can, therefore, assume that it represents his thought in a complete and comprehensive state. We also happen to possess an autographed manuscript (which is the one Osman Yahia is at present using as the basis for his critical edition), and consequently we have a reliable text at our disposal.<sup>5</sup> The importance of the *Futuhat* as well as of the *Fusus* has never been overlooked - a fact which is proved by an abundance of references. Even though the sheer size of this *opus magnum* is itself enough to discourage anyone attempting to produce an exhaustive commentary, nonetheless it has constantly been used - especially because a reading of it is indispensable for a correct interpretation of the *Fusus*. Jandi and Haydar Amoli, as well as many others, refer to it repeatedly.<sup>6</sup> Jami, also in many of his writings, cites the authority of the *Futuhat* very often, and one particularly interesting piece of evidence demonstrates the meticulous care he would take to grasp all its subtleties. The author of the *Rashahat ayn al-hayat*, a famous hagiographical work about the first masters of the Naqshbandiyya, describes an encounter which took place in 874/1469 between Jami and Ubaydallah Ahrar. Jami declared to Ahrar that in several passages in the *Futuhat* he had come up against problems which he was unable to resolve, and he described one of the most difficult ones. Ahrar then asked him to close the copy of the *Futuhat* which he was holding in his hands, and gave him some preliminary explanations. After having done so he said to him, 'Now, let's turn back to the book.' When Jami re-read the problematic passage, its meaning became perfectly clear to him.<sup>7</sup>

A century later Ahmad Sirhindi, who is far too often and, as Friedmann has shown, quite unjustly presented as an opponent of Ibn Arabi, also refers frequently to the *Futuhat* in his *Maktabat*.<sup>8</sup> As is well known, the same applies also to his contemporary Mulla Sadra, even though in some of his writings, prudence induced him to conceal his borrowings (which are nonetheless easily identifiable), there is no

lack of openly acknowledged references to the *Futuhat*, which are sometimes very extensive.<sup>9</sup>

BUT all these examples will no doubt already be familiar to you, and I am sure each of you would be able to add considerably to this highly arbitrary selection. I will, therefore, not extend this very brief list any further. The point I wish to make is the following. The innumerable writers whose works testify to the fact that they have read and re-read the *Futuhat*, and who often furnish us with extremely perceptive comments on various complex doctrinal themes which are expounded in the text or on the meaning of some passage which requires delicate interpretation, *never seem to consider the work as a whole*. The structure of this fundamental book—the number and sequence of its sections (*fusul*) and chapters (*abwah*), the subtle and extremely rigorous interrelationships between its different parts – appear to be ignored and at the very least are, as far as I know, never explained. Naturally, I make no claim to have read all the glosses, paraphrases and commentaries that have been produced by readers of the *Futuhat* in over seven centuries; but so far none of the specialists whom I have questioned seems to have discovered a text which invalidates my own observations. Everything suggests that the *Futuhat* have always been viewed as an extraordinary cornucopia from which everyone according to his individual inclination draws symbols, technical terms, ideas and expressions without suspecting (or without making us suspect) the coherence of this whole: without looking for the secret of its architecture. Similarly, many of the highly enigmatic pieces of information given by Ibn Arabi himself, for example the very surprising lists of spiritual sciences corresponding to each *manzil*, or the precise number of degrees corresponding to each *maqam*, remain unexplained. It must be pointed out that this silence on the part of Islamic writers is repeated by Western scholars in spite of the fact that their studies of Ibn Arabi continue to multiply. In both cases, it would seem that the forest is hidden by the trees.

THE fact that we find no answer to these questions in poets whose work is strongly influenced by Ibn Arabi is not surprising : the

literary form they have chosen and the particular nature of their inspiration are not conducive to this kind of analysis. For example, there is the case of Fakhruddin Iraqi, even though he studied the *Fusus* and the *Futuhat* with Qunawi. He admirably crystallizes the 'Divine Flashes' in his verses; however, he plainly felt no call to translate what he knew and what he felt, into painstaking discursive expositions. The same applies to everyone after him – whether in Iran, India or elsewhere – who translated Ibn Arabi's dazzling message into lyrics.

BUT, just to confine ourselves to the first generations of disciples, what are we to make of the silence of someone such as Sadruddin Qunawi, an exceptionally talented disciple of the Shaikh al-Akbar, to whom he in fact bequeathed the manuscript of the final draft of the *Futuhat*? How is it possible not to be disappointed to find no more than very partial observations in the writings of Jili, even though he wrote a *Sharh Mushkilat al-Futuhat*? In fact, in spite of its promising title this short treatise does no more than explain the statements featuring at the start of chapter 559 of the *Futuhat*, the *bab al-asrar*. According to Ibn Arabi, this chapter contains the quintessence of the *futuhat*. One could therefore expect that in the commentary which Jili devotes to it he would give some prominence to the secret logic in the composition of a book which he tells us with admiration is *a'zam al-kutub al-musannafa fi hadha i-ilm ... wa ayalluha ihatatan wa was'an*, while elsewhere he specifies that its author 'sometimes speaks in clear language and sometimes expresses himself symbolically'.<sup>11</sup> Nothing of the kind is to be found; the symbols retain their mystery. Obviously it is impossible here to review one by one all the authors from whom one might hope for some clarifications - or at the very least some enquiries- testifying to a comprehensive approach to Ibn Arabi's *summa mystica*. But I believe I am not mistaken if I repeat that they avoid the issue I am raising (and indeed that they also refrain from proposing any interpretation for a large number of highly abstruse utterances, of which I will soon give a few examples).

IN this respect the Arab commentators are no more satisfactory than their Persian counterparts: the works of Sha'rani, of Nabulusi, of Abdul Qadir al-Jazairi remain equally silent regarding the point that concerns us.

THIS brings us to the need to pose a fundamental question. If these people - whose perceptiveness as well as their veneration for Ibn Arabi are beyond any doubt - offer no explanation whatever, is this not very simply because there is nothing at all to explain? If the structure of the *Futuhat* elicits no comment from them, is this not because the structure is totally arbitrary and so resists any attempt to justify it? At first sight, a glance through the list of contents suggests that the answer is yes: it is extremely difficult to make out any orderly progression or any intelligible connection between the themes that are dealt with one after the other. The same subject is often dealt with on several separate occasions in different chapters, which are frequently at a considerable distance from each other and each of which seems to ignore the others. Long passages turn out to consist of the total or partial re-use of material from earlier treatises, which means that their content is necessarily heterogeneous in nature. And furthermore, what we are told by Ibn Arabi himself is that he sanctions this point of view: 'Neither this particular book nor any of my other works has been composed in the way that ordinary books are composed, and I do not write them according to the habitual method of authors.'<sup>12</sup> Again, later on, he emphasizes, 'I have not written one single letter of this book other than under the effect of divine dictation.'<sup>13</sup> This frequently repeated assertion as to the inspired nature of his writings tends to suggest that it would be pointless to attempt to discover in them a precise pattern. Ibn Arabi lends an additional argument to this hypothesis in the form of a comment on the presentation which, indeed, is extremely disconcerting for the reader of particulars, regarding the 'legal statutes' (*ahkam*). He admits that chapter 88, which expounds the principles (*usul*) from which these statutes derive, should logically have preceded rather than followed chapters 68 to 72, which expound their consequences. However, he states, 'It was

not from my personal choice that I retained this order.<sup>14</sup> And to illustrate this remark he compares the plentiful examples of *non sequitur* in the *Futhat* with the examples to be found in the *surahs* of the Quran, where the mutual proximity of successive verses appears to be purely accidental. The statements I have just quoted (and there are many other similar ones in the *Futuhat*) encourage one to conclude that a work which has been composed in obedience to such unpredictable inspirations, whether supernatural or not, is bound to be devoid of internal coherence, and that the enigmas it contains are necessarily indecipherable.

I believe it is correct to say that this conclusion is radically false. Paradoxically, the first indication that this must be so is provided by Ibn Arabi's analogy between the abrupt breaks in meaning in the text of the Quran and in his own book. In fact, as he explains in another<sup>15</sup> passage, the lack of order in the Holy Book is only apparent, 'Here (that is, between consecutive verses that seem unrelated to each other) a relationship of affinity exists, but it is extremely secret.'<sup>15</sup> Again, 'If you connect each verse with the one preceding it and the one following it, the power of the Divine Word will make you see that the verse in question requires what accompanies it in this way, and only attains its perfection by means of what surrounds it. This is the perspective which belongs to the perfect among spiritual men.'<sup>16</sup> In other words, this profound unity of the Quran remains unnoticed by the commonality of believers, and even the writers of *tafsir* are incapable of revealing it to us, but it is perceived by the *Arif bi-Llah*. This gives us reason to suspect that for Ibn Arabi the same essential unity also exists, and somehow or other is detectable in the *Futuhat*, where nothing is to be found, 'which does not proceed from an in-breathing of the Divine Spirit.'<sup>17</sup> The conclusion is all the more unavoidable because he also states that, 'Everything which we talk about in our gatherings and in our writings proceeds from the Quran and its treasures.'<sup>18</sup>

PERSONALLY I am convinced that in fact the *Futuhat* are neither

a disorderly encyclopaedia of bookish knowledge nor a heterogeneous collection of passages juxtaposed simply as a result of the caprices of inspiration. Today, lack of time makes it impossible to provide you with all the necessary answers; but I would like instead to offer you a demonstration of this claim insofar as it bears on several important points.<sup>19</sup>

IN his critical edition of the *Futuhat* which is at present in process of being published, Osman Yahia attempts to find an explanation for the number of chapters contained in its six sections (*fusul*).<sup>20</sup> His comments on the matter probably leave anyone who examines them unsatisfied: according to what he says it would seem that the different numbers were chosen by Ibn Arabi because in Islamic tradition they possessed a symbolic value, but without this value having any necessary or intelligible relationship to the nature of the corresponding *fusul*. For example, he points out — as anyone can easily do — that the number of chapters in the *fasl al-manazil* (the section on the 'spiritual abodes') is identical to the number of *surahs* in the Quran: 114. However he does not draw any particular conclusion from this observation; the number 114 could somehow or other have been chosen by Ibn Arabi for purely aesthetic reasons. As we will see, the truth of the matter is very different. In fact, in this instance as in the case of so many other enigmas, Ibn Arabi provides the reader with all the keys he needs. But these keys are deliberately scattered throughout the work, and most often placed in such a way that they remain unnoticed.

LET US look a little more closely at this *fasl al-manazil*: the fourth section in the work and one of the most mysterious. It extends from chapter 270 to chapter 383. It is obviously related at least by its title to one of the first chapters of the *Futuhat*: chapter 22, which itself is entitled *fi marifat ilm manzil al-manazil*. But *a priori* this chapter 22 — which Osman Yahia, plainly disconcerted, calls a *bab gharib*, a 'strange chapter' — poses more problems than it solves. In it we find a list assembling under nineteen principal 'spiritual abodes' (*ummahat al-manazil*) a series of secondary *manazil* which, in turn, contain a

whole series of others. The names given to all these *manazil* (they are names which we will find reappearing here and there in the *fasl al-manazil*) are a puzzle: *manzil al-istikhbar*, *manzil al-halak*, *manzil al-du'a*, *manzil al-rumuz* and so on. None of these designations corresponds to the taxonomy used in Sufi literature for distinguishing the different stages of spiritual life.

HOWEVER, when we juxtapose the cryptic remarks scattered throughout chapter 22 on the one hand, and throughout the chapters in the fourth *fasl* on the other, these names suddenly become completely meaningful: each of them corresponds either to a *surah* or to a group of *surahs*. The *manzil al-istikhbar* ('Abode of Interrogation') is the one which groups together the *surahs* beginning with an interrogative formula, for example, *surah 88 (Hal ataka hadith al-ghashiya ...)*. The *manzil al-hamd* ('Abode of Praise'), which is subdivided into five *manazil*, is made up of the five *surahs* (1, 2, 18, 34, 35) that begin with the formula *Al-hamdu li-Llah*. The *manzil al-rumuz* ('Abode of Symbols') contains all the *surahs* which start with the *huruf muqatta'a*, the mysterious individual letters that are also called *nuraniya*, 'luminous.' The *manzil al-dua* ('Abode of Appeal') is the name applied to all the *surahs* starting with the vocative formula *Yaayyuha ...*; the *manzil al-amr* ('Abode of Commandment') brings together the *surahs* which begin with a verb in the imperative, such as *qul* ('Speak!').

I will not go on enumerating the rest of these correspondences here, and will leave for a subsequent occasion the task of drawing up an exhaustive list identifying the Quranic references of all these technical terms in chapter 22. But these initial observations are enough to allow us to anticipate the conclusion, that each of the 114 chapters in the *fasl al-manazil*, in fact, corresponds to a *surah* and – more or less allusively – conveys its esoteric significance. However, it is in vain that one looks for what would seem to be the obvious correspondence between the first of these chapters and the first *surah* of the *Mushaf*, between the second chapter and the second *surah*, and so on.

The relationship one would have expected proves difficult to confirm.

THE key to this mystery is actually put in our hands on a number of occasions, particularly at the beginning of the *fasl*, in the second verse of the introductory poem which contains the word *uruj*, ‘ascent’ or ‘ascension.’ The journey through the spiritual abodes is a journey of ascent which – directly counter to the normal ordering of the Quranic vulgate – leads the *murid* from the last *surah* of the Quran, *Al-Nas*, through to the first, *Al-Fatiha*: ‘that which opens’, the one in which he receives the ultimate *fath*, the definitive illumination. In other words, it is a question of re-ascending from the furthest point of Universal Manifestation (as symbolized by the last word of the Quran: *al-nas*, ‘men’) back to the Divine Principle (as symbolized by the first *surah*, *Umm al-kitab*, ‘Mother of the Book’, and more specifically by the point of the *Ba*’ in the *basmala*). The apparently inexplicable sequence of the chapters now becomes perfectly coherent, and the correspondence which I have pointed out is demonstrable without any exception, whatever, in the actual text of each chapter and also often even in their titles. The following few examples will make the matter clear for anyone familiar with the Quran. The third *manzil* (chapter 272), *manzil tanzil al-tawhid*, very obviously corresponds to the third *surah* from last: the *surah Al-Ikhlas*, the theme of which is divine unity. The fourth (chapter 273), *manzil a-halak*, ‘Abode of Perdition’, corresponds to the *surah Al-Masad*, which describes the punishment of Abu Lahab. The sixth *manzil* (chapter 275), ‘Abode of the Repudiation of Idols’, answers to the sixth *surah su'udan* (still working backwards from the end to the beginning) and therefore to the *surah Al-Kafirun*. Following the same rule, the nineteenth *manzil* (chapter 288), ‘Abode of Recitation’, corresponds to the *surah Al-Alay*, in which the Prophet is commanded to recite the Revelation transmitted to him by the angel. The forty-ninth (chapter 316), ‘Abode of the Divine Peh’, corresponds to the *surah Al-Qalum* – and so on right through to the hundred-and-fortieth, and final *manzil*, the *manzil al-azama al-jamia* (‘Abode of Cumulative Immensity’) which is the one in which, after arriving at the goal of the initiatic journey, the

being realizes the secrets of the 'Mother of the Book.' Here again I will refrain from listing every single correspondence: to do so would anyway be superfluous, because anyone in possession of this key will easily be able to complete the brief list I have given.

THESE cursory remarks are by themselves quite sufficient to confirm that there is nothing at all fortuitous in the arrangement of this *fasl*, and that however peculiar the sequence of the subjects which it deals with may appear, this sequence obeys a very precise law. We can, for example, no longer be surprised to see chapter 366, on the *wuzara al-mahdi* (The Mahdi's Helpers), followed without any apparent justification by the chapter in which Ibn Arabi describes his ascension from heaven to heaven until he reaches the threshold of the Divine Presence. In fact according to the schema I outlined above, chapter 366 corresponds to the *surah Al-Kahf*, which is well known for its eschatological nature, while chapter 367 corresponds to the *surah Al-Isra* which alludes to the celestial ascension of the Prophet. And one will now understand that the reason why chapter 336 deals with the *mubava'at al-qutb*, the 'Pact with the Pole', is because according to the same logic it is echoing the sura *Al-Fath*, which refers to the pact between the Companions and the Prophet at Hudaybiyya (Quran 48:10 and 18).

IN the same way we find the solution to other enigmas. I will illustrate this point by referring to chapter 273,<sup>21</sup> which contains some passages that could give the reader the impression of being the products of a disordered imagination or – on the most favourable hypothesis – of referring to an incommunicable visionary experience. Ibn Arabi explains how, guided by the First Intellect, he visits this *mauzil* which contains five chambers (*buyut*). In each of these chambers, chests (*khazain*) are shut away. Each chest has locks (*aqfal*), each lock has keys (*mafatih*), and each key has to be turned a specific number of times (*harakat*). Then the Shaikh al-Akbar describes these chambers together with their contents, one by one: the first chest in the first chamber has three locks, the first of these locks has three

keys, the first of these keys has to be turned four hundred times, and so on. I am sure that more often than not these strange details disarm the reader's curiosity. However, they are easy to interpret once one knows that this *manzil* is the one corresponding to the *surah Al-Masad*: the five chambers are this *surah's* five verses. The chests are the words in each verse, the number of locks is the number of letters in each of the words, the keys are the graphic signs of which the letters are composed (diacritical points and consonantal *ductus*), and the turnings of the key represent the numerical values of these letters according to the *abjad*. The first chest is therefore the word *tabbat*: it consists of three letters - or three locks. The first of these locks is the *Ta'*. This is composed of three graphic signs - and therefore three keys - and has a numerical value of 400. Comparable explanations, in which the science of letters (*ilm al-huruf*) plays a major role that is specifically announced in chapter 2 of the *Futuhat*, can be given every time one encounters expositions of this type - and regardless of where in the text they occur.<sup>22</sup> Whatever one's views are about something which for many people is no more than a gratuitous intellectual game, one is bound to admit that this is a game which is subject to rules.

WHILE still confining ourselves to the *fasl al-manzil* in particular, we find one other riddle solved at the same time. This is the enigma posed by the tabulations, placed at the end of each of the 114 chapters, of the spiritual sciences corresponding to every *manzil*. These listings group together ideas such that any attempt to discover a rational link between them would be in vain; one's first impression on reading them is of being confronted with a catalogue composed by a writer who has been guided entirely by his fantasy. Without being in a position to go into details – which would require juxtaposing numerous quotations from the Quran against entire pages of the *Futuhat* – I will simply point out that each of the sciences referred to is related to the content of either one or several verses in the *surah* corresponding to the *manzil* in question. So, once again, we find ourselves faced with statements which, in spite of their chaotic appearance, derive from the application of a method based on

ciples that, once explained, prove to be extremely simple.

I will reserve a detailed examination of the structure of the other five sections for another occasion. However, I would like here to raise very briefly the question of the overall architecture of the *Futuhat*. The division into six *fusul* is easily explained as due to the special significance of the number six in Ibn Arabi's teaching. This significance is not simply a result of the fact that six is the number of the days of Creation, as Osman Yahia notes (and also the number of spatial dimensions). For Ibn Arabi 6, which is the first perfect number (because  $6 = 1/6 + 1/3 + 1/2$ ),<sup>23</sup> is above all else the symbolic number of the *insan kamil* - in other words of the focal point of his entire teaching.<sup>24</sup> This number actually expresses the value according to *abjad* of the letter *waw*: a letter which although not written, manifests in the vocal enunciation of the existentiating *kun* between the *Kaf* and the *Nun*, and for this reason is identified by the Shaikh al-Akbar with the *Haqqa Muhammadiyya*, which is the 'isthmus' (*barzakh*) between the *Haqq* and the *Khalq*, between the Divine Principle and Its Manifestation.<sup>25</sup> This identification is also based on the grammatical function of the *waw*, which in Arabic performs the role of copula and consequently unites what is separated.

MORE precisely, however, the explanation of the number and sequence of the *fusul* resides in the number and nature of the divine attributes (*sifat*) and modes of relation (*nisab*) upon which the created being depends.<sup>26</sup> Each *fasl* corresponds to one of these six Names of God. The first (*fasl al-ma'arif*, the 'section of knowledges') is plainly related to the first Name, *Al-Alim*, The Knower. The second (*fasl al-mu'amalat*), dealing with the manners of behaviour by means of which the postulant (*al-murid*, literally 'he who wants') progresses upon the Path, corresponds to the second of these Divine Names which is, precisely, *Al-Murid*. Corresponding to the third Divine Name in the series - *Al-Qadir*, The Omnipotent - is the *fasl al-ahwal*, the section on the spiritual states produced in man by the Divine Omnipotence without his being able to acquire them by his own

strength. The fourth Name is *Al-Qa'il* or *Al-Mutakallim*, 'He who speaks': its relation to the fourth *fasl*, in which each stage of spiritual realization is identified with one of the *surahs* in the Quran - or Divine Word - is equally clear. The next *fasl* deals with the munazalat, or 'meetings halfway' between God and creature: meetings in which man converses with God face to face. It corresponds to the fifth Name: *Al-Sami*, 'He who listens'. Finally, the sixth *fasl* is the section on the *maqamat* or 'stations', each of which represents a specific mode of contemplation (*mushahada*). This in turn is related to the sixth Divine Name: *Al-Basir*, 'He who sees.'

It remains to suggest the reason why the *Futuhat* consist of five hundred and sixty chapters in all, while bearing in mind that this number had been decided on in advance at the very first stages of composition: the summary of the work which is printed between pages 11 and 30 of the Egyptian edition had in fact already been written by the end of the year 599 (A.H.), which is when Ibn Arabi started composing the book. Although it is not possible to be absolutely certain, I believe that there are two facts worth noting which are hardly mere coincidences. The first of these facts is that the number five hundred and sixty is also the number of words in the *surah Al-Fath*: it is difficult to suppose that this is just an accident, especially when on the one hand we remember that before assuming its plural form the title of the work was *Al-Fath al-Makki*, on the other hand we recall the esoteric commentaries on this *surah*.<sup>27</sup> The second fact is very simply that the Shaikh al-Akbar was born in the year 560 of the Hegira. This date is, therefore, the point of departure for that extraordinary spiritual 'conquest' from which the *Futuhat* would harvest the fruits.

I must stress that what I have said about the *Futuhat*, could be said, *mutatis mutandis*, about other works as well : the apparently illogical structure of books like *Kitab al-Shahid*, *Kitab al-Abadila* or *Kitabal-Tarajim*, among many others, becomes quite clear when you find their Quranic 'key.' To give you an example, each of the

sixty-nine chapters of the *Kitab al-Tarajim* corresponds to a *surah* of the Quran, beginning by *surah Al-Haqqa* (which is the sixty-ninth in the *mushaf*) and ending by *surah al-Fatiha*. By the same token, you cannot really understand the *Kitab al-Tajalliyat* until you see that each of its sections is linked to one of the verses of *surah Al-Baqara*. And that is not the whole story because, as soon as you begin to perceive this relationship between the Quran and Ibn Arabi's books, secret harmonies will be disclosed to you between many parts of his writings which, at first sight, seemed to be quite unconnected. As an example of this kind of hidden network, you will find that chapter 330 and chapter 400 of the *Futuhat*, chapter 23 of *Kitab al-Shahid* and chapter 16 of *Kitab al-Tarajim* are linked together by a common but well-concealed reference to *surah Al-Qamar* (s .54) and that they complete each other. Conversely, if you fail to see that these several texts are closely interconnected, you will miss an important part of their meaning.

Is it reasonable to believe that none of the individuals whom I mentioned to start with was in a position to provide answers to the various questions I have raised? Or, as an alternative hypothesis, are we to suppose that these questions never occurred to them? Regardless of whether they were Sunnis or Shi'ites, and even if they did happen to dispute his position on specific issues, they all shared a manifest veneration for the Shaikh al-Akbar. Nothing that he wrote was a matter of indifference to them. Each of his works was scrutinized by them with vigilant attention, as attested by the subtle exegeses of his thought of which their own books provide so many examples. Like Jami in the story narrated earlier, they never resigned themselves to not understanding even the most obscure or most ambiguous aspects of Ibn Arabi's writings, and they sought a resolution to these *mushkilat* with tireless zeal. To me it is, therefore, self-evident that the majority, if not all, of them will not have been able either to ignore the problems about which I have spoken or to resign themselves to leaving them unsolved. These possibilities are all the more unlikely because - as I believe I have demonstrated - the

solutions are pointed to by a considerable number of clues which they could not have missed.

ACCORDINGLY, I am convinced that in this particular case it is a matter of deliberate silence. Very significantly, at the start of his *Nass al-Nusus*, Haydar Amoli elaborates in ten pages of preliminaries on the need for secrecy - *kitman al-asrar al-ilahiyya an ghayri ahliha* - and in justification of this rule cites verses from the Quran, *hadith* and a lengthy passage from chapter 31 of the *Futuhat*. He also underlines the necessity, for a genuine understanding of Ibn Arabi's writings, of a relationship of spiritual affinity (*munasaba*) with their author, and he points out that such a relationship is exceptional, 'Even among the Poles and their like.'

THIS mandate for discretion - which I have considered appropriate to infringe here to a small degree - is vigorously stated by Ibn Arabi on a number of occasions and also observed by him as well : either because it is a question of knowledge that is dangerous (*muhliku*) and the use of which could lead the imprudent to their perdition,<sup>28</sup> or because the disclosure of certain secrets would enable imposters to claim for themselves improperly a degree of sainthood that is beyond their reach. So, to come back to one of the enigmas which we solved earlier by way of example, after speaking of the 'chambers', 'chests', 'locks' and 'keys' of the fifth manzil (the one corresponding to the *surah Al-Nasr*), he points out that if he keeps silent as to the meaning of these symbolic terms, this is to prevent the liar (*al-kudhib*) from laying claim to have come into possession of this science through a personal spiritual realization.<sup>29</sup> I see no room for doubt that through the course of the ages this same discipline was put into practice by the most eminent of Ibn Arabi's interpreters, and that at least in the majority of cases this accounts for the strange lacunas in their commentaries which we noted earlier.

I would like to make a last and important remark : please, don't think of what I have told you as of just a clever and amusing piece of detective work. What I tried to point out is that you must take Ibn

Arabi at his word and understand that there is a close, deliberate and meaningful relationship between the Quran and everything he wrote. To keep that in mind is the only way to read his books as he intended them to be read.

### Notes and References

1. On the most recent polemics, see Emil Homerin, 'Ibn Arabi in the People's Assembly', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 40, no. 3, 1986, pp. 462-447
2. Ibn Taymiyya, *Maymu'at al-rasa'il wa l-masa'il*, ed. Rashid Rida, IV pp. 42-45; Ibn Al-Ahdal, *Kashf al Ghita*, Tunis, 1964, p. 192 ff. ; Buqa'i, *Tanbih al-ghabi ila takfir Ibn Arabi* (published under the title *Masra' al-tasawwuf*), Caire, 1953, pp. 76, 88 . . . ; Sakhawi, *Al-Qawl al-munbi*, Ms. Berlin, Spr. 790, t. 24b, 97b etc.
3. *Un océan sans rivage Ibn Arabi, le Livre et la Loi*, to be published by Editions du Seuil, Paris, in February 1992.
4. All subsequent references to the *Futuhat* (= *Fut*) are to the Egyptian edition of 1329 H., in 4 volumes, or to the reprint, Beirut, Dar Sadir, no date (*circa* 1970).
5. That is not the case with the *Fusus*. This explains-but does not justify - the hazardous hypotheses entertained by some defenders of Ibn Arabi's orthodoxy, who are prompted by their ill-inspired zeal to denounce interpolations - which according to them distort its meaning - in the text as it has come down to us. See for example my review of Mahmud Ghurab's book, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam* (Damascus 1985), in *Studia Islamica* LXIII, pp. 179-182. Needless to say, a new critical edition of the *Fusus* based on the manuscripts not taken into account by Afifi would be extremely desirable.
6. Cf. Jandi, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam*, Mashhad 1982; Haydar Amoli, *Nass al-Nusus*, ed. H. Corbin and O. Yahia, Tehran-Paris 1975, and *Jami' al-asrar* (in H. Corbin and O. Yahia's *La Philosophie Shi'ite*, Tehran-Paris 1969). In this last work see for example the long quotation from chapter 336 of the *Futuhat* on pp. 440 f.
7. Fakhar al-Din Ali b. Husayn Wa'iz al-Kashifi, *Rashahat avn al-hayat*, ed. Ali Asghar Mu'inian, 2 vols., Tehran 2356, I, pp. 249-50.
8. *Maktabat-i Imam-i Rabbani*, Lucknow 1889. Sirhindi's attention was drawn not only by the doctrinal ideas expounded in the *Futuhat* but also by the anecdotes it contains. See for example letter 58 (in which he criticizes the *tanassukh*), where

he mentions the story of Ibn Arabi's visionary encounter at the Ka'ba with a man belonging to a humanity prior to our own (cf. *Fut* III, pp. 348 and 549). As Y. Friedmann Observes (*Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi*. Montreal-London 1971, p. 64) the *Mujaddid* recommends the study of Ibn Arabi's works and considers them indispensable to the proper appreciation of his own spiritual insights.

- 9 As is the case in *Al hikma al muta'aliyya fi l-asfar*. Regarding this question see James W. Morris' introduction to his translation of *Al hikma al arshiyah* (*The Wisdom of the Throne*, Princeton 1981) which is a work in which explicit allusions to the *Futuhat* although more rare are far from exceptional (cf. *ibid.* pp. 178, 234, 5, 239, 40 etc.)
- 11 This comment occurs in the third line of the manuscript of the *Sharh mushkilat al-Futuhat* belonging to my private collection. Although it is stated in the explicit that the manuscript contains a commentary on the sections of the *bab il-asrar* which correspond to the first eleven chapters of the *Futuhat* in actual fact it only comments on ten of these sections (the last sentence commented on is the one on line 14 of *Fut* IV, p. 329). In passing it is worth nothing that where chapter 559 is concerned the Cairo edition is clearly faulty in particular there are a considerable number of anomalies in the numbering of the sections.
- 12 *Fut* I p. 59
- 13 *Fut* II p. 456
- 14 *Fut* II p. 163
- 15 *Fut* III p. 200
- 16 *Fut* IV p. 137 Cf. also II p. 548
- 17 *Fut* III p. 101
- 18 *Fut* III p. 334
- 19 I would like to make it clear that the following clarifications, as well as the solutions to this problem which I will eventually provide elsewhere, are very far from being attributable to me alone. In the first instant I must reiterate my debt to Michel Valsan who over a period of many years guided me in my discovery of Ibn Arabi. My thanks are also due to my learned friend Abdelbaki Mettah our exchanges of correspondence have on numerous occasions enabled me to clarify and correct my own interpretations. Finally I am indebted to some among those who today ensure the transmission of the *khirqa akbariyya* for support without which my efforts would have been in vain.
- 20 See volume III Cairo 1974 pp. 37-8
- 21 *Fut* II pp. 582-6
- 22 The *fata* (the mystical youth according to Corbin's translation) who appears to Ibn Arabi in chapter 1 reveals to him the secret of the *imam muhib* (cf. *Fut*, IV p. 367) in other words the secret of the Book which contains all things'

(cf. *Futūh* I, p. 180) by inviting him to decipher what is inscribed on his own person as he says at the end of the chapter, 'Examine the details of my constitution and the disposition of my form' (*Futūh*, I, p. 48). According to the logic of this graphic symbolism the science of letters (the principles of which are the subject of chapter 2) is the science that makes the 'deciphering' possible and simultaneously explains both the length of the exposition devoted to it and the position it occupies at the start of the *Futuhat*. For example, by referring to the *ilm al-huruf* (the significance of which is conveyed in this way) we can interpret the number of degrees (*darajat*) corresponding to each of the spiritual categories (*tariqat malamatiyya*) and to their subdivisions (*ahl al-ihsan*, *ahl al-adab*) in the series of chapters from 74 to 185 (*fasl al-mu'amalat*). All these numbers - and more generally speaking all the numbers that appear in the *Futuhat* - are obtained by a method of calculation which is perfectly intelligible.

23 *Futūh* II p. 469

24 *Ibid*

25 *Futūh* p. 283

26 *Futūh* I, p. 493. Normally this series of traditional Divine Names - the *asma al-dhat* - includes a seventh (*Al-Hayy*, 'The Living'). However, Ibn Arabi explains that if he speaks of six Names rather than seven this is because *Al-Hayy* is the Name which enables the other six to subsist and is therefore in a sense their common principle.

27 Cf. e.g. *Futūh* II p. 60, III p. 153, IV p. 50 and Qashani, *Ta'wilat* (published under the name of Ibn Arabi) Beirut 1968, II, pp. 505-510

28 Cf. *Futūh* II p. 584. Compare also *Futūh* I p. 190 where Ibn Arabi declares that he is deliberately abstaining from communicating certain secrets of the *ilm al-huruf* and mentions a little further on that he has taken an oath never to use the powers granted by this science.

29 *Futūh* II p. 590





# Ameer Khusro in the Presence of His Mentor Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia

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Nisar Ahmed Faruqi

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**I**T is not necessary to collect evidences as to how affectionately Hazrat Khwaja Nizam al-Din Aulia loved his able disciple Ameer Khusro, because it has now become proverbial. 'There are some moments' Hazrat Nizam al-Din once declared, 'when I am fed up of all, so much so of my own self, but I am never tired of this 'Turk.'<sup>1</sup> He had conferred the title of '*Turkullah*'<sup>2</sup> on Ameer Khusro. In classical poetry '*turk*' tantamounts to 'beloved', hence '*Turkut:ah*' is also synonymous to '*Mahboob-e Ilahi*'.<sup>4</sup>

EARLY sources like *Fawaid al-Fuad* and *Sair al- Auliya* do not indicate that Ameer Khusro had received Khilafat (deputyship) from his spiritual mentor Hazrat Nizam al-Din, but he was the most favorite disciple undoubtedly. He was not assigned the Khilafat because of his association with the royal court and Hazrat Nizam al-Din never prevented him from this association. However, *Lataife Ashrafi* has reckoned Ameer Khusro among the sincere successors and intimate companions' of the Skaikh.<sup>3</sup>

WHEN Ameer Khusro was introduced to the Shaikh, what

circumstances led to their communion, and when Ameer Khusro was initiated into the *silsilah* are the questions on which decisive evidences are yet to be explored. Hazrat Nizam al-Din had received his early education in his homeland Budaun (Uttar Pradesh) under the supervision of his pious mother. Later he proceeded to Delhi for higher studies. In the first instance he travelled singly with a view to exploring the possibilities and in the second trip he migrated along with his mother, elder widow sister, and her children. At that time he was between 18–20 years of age. At the same time, perhaps, he came in contact with Ameer Khusro's father.

ACCORDING to the preface of *Ghurrat al-Kamal* Ameer Khusro was born in 651 A.H./AD 1253–54. It is also supported by some other sources. When his father Ameer Saif al-Din Mahmood died, Khusro was not more than eight years of age.<sup>4</sup> It means that his father passed away in 659 or 660 A.H./AD 1260–62. Some reports say — and I am unable to find out their origin — that Khusro accompanied by his father came in the assembly of Hazrat Nizam al-Din. It was his maiden visit. He stood at the door of *Khanqah* and did not enter the house along with his father. He composed a quatrain extemporaneously and sent it away to the Shaikh : It reads thus:

تو آں شاہی کر براوں قصرت بکر تر گر نشید ہاں گردد  
نفری مستندی بر در آمد بسایا اندروں یا ہاں گردد

Thou art such a King that when a pigeon perches up  
on the top of thy palace it becomes a falcon,  
A poor and distressed person is standing on thy  
threshold  
Is he permitted to get in or should he go back?

HAZRAT Nizam al-Din is reported to have replied spontaneously in the form of a quatrain which he wrote down on a slip and dispatched:

ایا اندروں مرد حقیقت کرباکے نفس مہد از گردد  
اگر ابلجود آں مسند ندان ازان راہی کر کم سه ہاں گردد

The seeker for truth should enter to share our secrets for a while; But if he is an ignorant and a fool, he should immediately retreat.

AMEER Khusro became a disciple (*murid*) of Hazrat Nizam al-Din after reaching the age of puberty as is recorded by *Sair al-Auliya*.<sup>5</sup> But if the above episode is correct then it must have happened before 660 A.H./AD 1261–62 when Khusro was 8 years old and he himself writes in the preface of *Ghurrat al-Kamal* that he started composing verses at the age of 12 which means that he began his poetical career after the death of his father around 662 A.H./AD 1263–64 and before the succession of Sultan Balban. It is commonly believed that Shaikh Farid al-Din Masud Ganje-Shakar died in Muharram 664 A.H./AD 1265. But the *Khilafatnama* (certificate of succession) issued by him to Shaikh Nizam al-Din and preserved by *Sair al-Auliya*<sup>6</sup> records the date as 669 A.H./AD 1270–71.

A manuscript of *Shama'il al-Atqiya* preserved in the National Museum of India, New Delhi, contains a few chronograms and therein '*Kalia-e Junj-e Shakar Bud*' is given as the chronogram of Shaikh Farid which tells 670 A.H./AD 1271. This much we know definitely that Shaikh Farid had conferred his *khilafat* to Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya during the last year of his life. It is unbelievable that during the lifetime of his mentor and without acquiring proper permission (*khilafat*) Shaikh Nizam al-Din should initiate any one into the *silsilah*. On the other hand, another version says that Nizam al-Din Auliya did not initiate any one into the *silsilah* so long as Badr al-Din Ishaque (the *khalifa* and son-in-law of Shaikh Farid) was alive. His date of death engraved on the gate of his tomb is 693 A.H./AD 1293–94 but it was placed by Khwaja Hasan Nizami (d. July 1955) and I do not know his source of information. Shaikh Badr al-Din Ishaque was alive at least 6–7 years after the death of Shaikh Farid. We may therefore conclude that Ameer Khusro became the disciple of Shaikh Nizam al-Din after 680 A.H./AD 1281–82 when he had become quite mature. Dr Wahid Mirza is of the opinion that Khusro was initiated into the *silsilah* in 671 A.H./AD 1271–72, i.e. in the early days of Hazrat Nizam al-Din when he had not even properly settled in Delhi. In this case it would be wrong to believe that Ameer Khusro's father was also a disciple (*murid*) of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya.

AMEER KHUSRO had two brothers : Husam al-Din Outlagh Khan who died in 698 A.H./AD 1298–99 in the same week when his mother passed

away, and 'Izz al-Din 'Ali Shah whom we meet in the assembly held on the 13th of Ramazan 707 A.H. / 7th March AD 1308<sup>8</sup> and recorded in *Fawa'id al-Fuad*. Ameer Hasan Dehlavi says:

مرالیں ملٹاہ ملکہ تھے کر کے از مریدان نامی بود

Izz al-Din 'Ali Shah, may Allah grant him safety, was one of the distinguished disciples.

ACCORDING to Jamali<sup>9</sup> he was elder brother and Wahid Mirza has placed Ameer Khusro in the middle.<sup>10</sup> Among the offshoots of Khusro we come across four sons and two daughters: Ghayath al-Din Malik, Ahmad, Mohammad<sup>11</sup> Khizr, and Mubarak. Daughters are: 'Afifa & Mainmoona. I am inclined to believe that all of them were initiated in the Chishti Nizami order by Hazrat Nizam al-Din. A grandson of Khusro called '*Khusraw-e Thani*' (the second Khusro) is found in the assemblies of Hazrat Nasir al-Din Mahmood Awadhi alias Chiragh-e Delhi (d.757 A.H./AD 1356). He was also probably a poet like his grandfather. Syed Mohammad Husaini Gesu Daraz (d. 825 A.H./AD 1422) had developed intimate friendship with him. One day some disciples of Chiragh-e Delhi conversed that Sufis usually put on yellow shoes but our Shaikh (Chiragh-e Delhi) prefers red pair of shoes; what could possibly be the reason behind it? Someone purchased a pair of fine quality yellow shoes and presented to the Shaikh (Chiragh-e Delhi), who keeping one foot on the prayer carpet put only one piece of that pair as trial and granted that yellow shoes to Khusro-II, i.e. the grandson of Ameer Khusro, because Chiragh-e Delhi following the tradition of his Shaikh used to wear red shoes. Khusro-II came out from his presence extremely happy and said to Syed Mohammad Husaini Gesu Daraz that he had received a pair of shoes from the Shaikh as a gift. 'The gift of shoes from the saints; says Gesu Daraz is an allusion indicating either high ranks in sufistic progress, or the recipient would himself depart from this world.' The colour of those shoes, had not faded that Khusro-II fell suddenly ill and after a few days passed away.<sup>12</sup> This episode is related to Chiragh-e Delhi, so Khusro-II must have died before 757 A.H./AD 1356.

<sup>8</sup>IMAD al-Mulk Rawat 'Arz (d. 671 A.H./AD 1272–73) was maternal

grandfather of Ameer Khusro. A man of princely grandeur, his life style was luxurious as we come to know from the account given by Barani.<sup>13</sup> The full size *Haveli* of 'Imad al-Mulk was adjacent to the Manda (i.e. small) gate bridge. Hazrat Nizam al-Din had also lived in this *Haveli* for some time, before he settled in Ghayathpur (ca 686 A.H./AD 1287–88) he had also contemplated to take up his residence in Patiali because at that time Ameer Khusro was also there.<sup>14</sup> Ameer Khurd Kirmani says that it was the beginning of the poetic career of Ameer Khusro. Whatever he composed in those days he used to present for correction to Hazrat Shaikh Nizam al-Din. 'Better you pursue the style of Safahani poets i.e. impassioned with amorous details:

(روزی حضرت سلطان الشاعر فرمود : طرز صفاہان بھوی یعنی  
مشن امیز و زلف و غال امیز)

DICTION and style of Sadi Shirazi (d.ca 691 A.H.) was most popular and enchanting; both Ameer Khusro and Hasan Sijzi tried hard to follow it but they could not succeed. Ameer Khusro valued the advice given by the Shaikh and embellished his diction with delicate sensibilities and keenly-felt amorous passions so much so that he developed an exquisite style of his own. The suggestion made by the Shaikh also speaks of his sublime critical consciousness and refined taste of poetry. He gauged the parts of Ameer Khusro at the very early stage and channellized his poetical genius to a right direction. Later, Khusro presented his poetical collection '*Ghurrat al-Kamal*', '*Wasat al-Havar*' and '*Nihavat al-Kamal*' to the Shaikh and almost in the doxology of all his works Ameer Khusro, after praising God and His Messenger has paid sincere tributes to his mentor Hazrat Nizam al-Din before eulogizing the monarch. In the preface of *Diwan Ghurrat al-Kamal* he records :

"بعد از توحید احمد و محمد صلی اللہ طیب و سلم آنچه بر بسته فرض است خواندن دهی  
فعی نکمل و مکتمل و مقصداًی واصل و موصل و خوان تو قیچی حنایت الی و مفهوم  
ند اس سار ناتا هی است بجان شنی کر آئی است از مصنف مجید بلکه مستحب  
سریع از مشهور اوصیل رسول که بالحدیث شنی مالم بکشنا اشیوع مالم نظرنا اگر  
والهین کر نظم کار مالم بکوشنا منظوم بخوا او بر بسته است زی بیانی صادر نقفر

کر گئوں تا اُنیں آنحضرت پاک شریف مسیح بن نبی کے  
است و جس دنیا میں رہوں گے اُنکے مطلعات "وَعِنْهُدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ  
لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ" را درجیں اذل حل کر دو، ولی ریشم پر صفت ترتیب  
بِنَ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ شکل، درود الطیش، بلوغ زبان  
وجوہہ یومِ میڈیا ناضرہ ای رہبنا ناظرہ مخصوص، شاعر برائے اور بیس  
سازوں کی بیت الفریض است، المسجد بیت کل تھی و بیت، در آں روزگار  
ہر گھنستار، رابنگندہ، والوزن یومِ میڈیا الحق، اسید و ارم کو درسیزان  
اقوال رکیب، ادا اگ وزنی باشد از ماخ و محاب و باشد ۹

After unification of God and encomium of the Prophet Mohammad (God bless him and grant him salvation) it is incumbent on me to pray for he who is perfect and complementing, a model who is in communion with God and who brings into union, a sign of divine providence containing the gist of infinite secrets, glorified is my Shaikh who is a paragon, a verse from the Sacred Book may a correct version of the decree (أُنْزَلَ رَسُولُهُ بِالْهُدَى) Shaikh of the world nay Shaikh of the Shaikhs of the world, Nizam al Haqq wal Din (statute of the Truth and order of the Faith) that the order of mundane affairs has become united with the orderly gems of his rosary How nice is the observer with sincere looks who has assimilated the hidden contents of (أُنْزَلَ رَسُولُهُ بِالْهُدَى) (let me have a look on thee in the eyeball of رَكَنْتُ مَرَأَهُ لَا يَقْدِمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ) as if you see him How wonderful is the perceiver of divine mysteries who learned the obcurities of (and with Him rest the keys to the Unseen which nobody knows except him) in the first vision that he received in Sempiternity His kind passionate heart is indulged in bringing closer (وَعِنْهُدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ) indeed the mercy of Allah is close to the good doers, and his pure innerself furtively designated to (وَجْهُهُ يَوْمَ مَیَاضَهُ إِلَی رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةً) the shining faces that day would be beholding their Lord What *hut* (couplet) a poet can compose for him as the *hut* of Allah (i.e. Kaba) is his house (الْمَسْجَدُ بَيْتُ كُلِّ تَقْوَى وَبَرِّ) mosque is the house

of each God-fearing good-doing person.' The day when all spoken words will be adjudged (وَالْوَنَتْ يَوْمَ الْحِسْبَانَ) and the weighting that day is true.' I am hopeful that if there would be any weight in my pallid words it would be because of his praises and encomiums.

AMONG the works of Khusro, mathnavi 'Qiran al-Sadain' and 'Tughlaqnama' do not contain verses commending the Shaikh. *Tughlaqnama* had remained unaccomplished but *Qiran al-Sadain* was composed in 688 A.H./AD 1289–90. We must contemplate as to why it does not contain the praise of the Shaikh. One simple interpretation could be that by that time Khusro had not become a disciple of the Shaikh. The second possible reason could be the fact that it contains the story of the reunion of Moizz al-Din Kaiqubadh and Bughra Khan.

KHUSRO might have deliberately avoided the Shaikh's praise before eulogizing the king.

His mathnavi 'Shirin Khusro' completed in 698 A.H./AD 1298–99 contains 26 couplets in praise of the Shaikh including:

بَقْشَ كَرْدَهْ جَبِيلَ آشْخَانَهْ تَلَكَ درْ مَجْنَهْ اوْ كَلْكَهْ نَادَهْ  
دَلَ ازْ فَرَحْ خَزَرَشَ بَادَ سَورَهْ مُسْبَدَهْ اَيَهْ فَرَحْ خَضْرَهْ ازْ بَقْشَ دَوَهْ

(On his roof top Gabriel has made his abode. Angels in his courtyard are like homely birds. May our heart remain filled with the light of his presence and anything else should remain away from us through his blessings.)

THE other mathnavi entitled 'Laila Majnun' was also penned by him in 698 A.H. By that time the spiritual mission of Shaikh Nizam al-Din had attained its exquisitely sublime glory and had infused fresh spirit in the decaying social order of yore. There are 15 couplets in his praise beginning with the heading:

مَدْعُوكْ شَعْرَهْ طَرِيقَهْ نَظَامَهْ اَمَنَهْ وَاسِيَهْ مَهْدَى كَرْمَلَهْ آخَرَ الزَّانَشَ فَرَسْتَارَهْ تَادَمَهْ  
بَانَ كَلَى اوْ اِسْلَامَهْ مَهْدَى رَا اَزْرَ زَنَهْ كَرْدَهْ اَنَسَهْ دَمَهْ جَادَهْ بَطَهْرَهْ  
شَعْرَهْ اَنَهْ اَنَسِيَهْ بَطَهْرُهْ بَهَائِهْ =

'Praise of the Skaikh of *Tariqat* (master of faith), order of the Truth and Reality, who has been sent as Jesus at the closing time so that his life giving breath should revitalize the religion of Islam to give it another lease of life. May Allah gratify the Muslims through his long life:

چون گھوہر دیجی خواصہ سخت اذ غیب شنیدم آنکہ کتنم  
 انکوں فتدری ڈھر مسان ریزم بسیہ غبید ٹان  
 قطب زم و پناہ ایمان سے جلا جسد کریمان  
 در شریع نظام دین احمد یعنی کر نقام دینا مند  
 در عبودہ فضیر پادشاہی در مسلم دل جہاں پناہی  
 بر خاکِ زرمت آسان بر پیغمبر ز دلت آستان  
 شاہنشہ بے سریرو د بے گان شاہ افسوس بناک پاے مقام  
 بیسان اپنے بل پاک بیسان بیدار ترین شب نشینان  
 سند ز شہر بر قریش باد  
 نہ دوچھ سدارہ پاک ارش باد

When I arranged the gems of Khwaja's praise, I received from the unseen what I composed. Now some of the meanings I strew upon that second Junaid, pivot of the time, a home for the faith, chief of all noble hearted persons, who in the *shari'a* is the statute of the religion of Ahmad, namely Nizam al-Din Mohammad. A *dervish* in his cell, like a king who furtively provides shelter to the world. He is a sky of compassion on this earth having his place in heavens. A crownless, throneless emperor, dust of whose feet is wanted by the kings. The more keen observer among the pures, the most awake among those who remain watchful during the night. May his seat be above the heavens and may Khusro be his attendant.'

SIMILARLY in the mathnavi '*Matla' al-Anwar*' composed in 698 A.H./1298-99 Khusro inserted 48 couplets in the praise of his mentor before eulogizing the ruling monarch:

بیش اُم قطبی حقیقت نظام خمز و سیع از دم بسی اعلان

تیان عسم اسان  
چندو کن ان در نظرش چرزن  
چون بتوا بوده دو دست دسا  
رشتہ هرگشت کمیش  
سک کارشن بمند وح و اصل  
کافی تال اللہ و متل الرحمون  
زیر فک قطبی زمانه هوت  
قلب دو گویند پیمانه هوت  
بر دیر او هر کار ارادت نمود  
زندہ چاویده شد، اور مُرد بود  
از پیغمبر ابی جانها رقیب  
را صردوی کا بلطفیت صفا  
رفته متدم بر متدم متعظ  
تائب وی ائمه ایام او  
چون دم ایام زده کام او  
مرے بوسے از بر سوداست پاک  
سر کر زیر بستی گشت ناک  
منشی از دی بعنای من  
خواجہ نظام است و نقای من

(Nizam the Shaikh of all people, the axis of Reality who by virtue of his life-giving breaths is like Khizr and vlasih. Sacrosanct ladies of heavenly *harem* remain constantly before his sight. When he raises his two hands for prayer, every finger becomes a key to the doors of heavens. In all laws and by-laws his affairs are governed by the sayings of Allah and His Messenger. He is the pivot beneath the skies. It is said there are two poles (Qutb) but he is matchless. Anyone who came over his door with sincerity found eternal life even after death. He is our gaurd if souls go astray and he is the curer of ailing hearts. A follower of spiritual path who sets his foot in total conformity with the tradition of the Prophet. When he is inspired in his affairs, it substitutes for *wahy* (revelation). A head trodden under his feet becomes totally free from sadness and gloom. I am proud of being his slave, my master is Nizam and I am therefore Nizami.)

NEXT year in 699 A.H./AD 1299–1300 he penned down *mathnavi* *Aina-e Iskandari* which also contains 37 verses in praise of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya including:

پناہ چنان، دین حق رانقام رہ شکس را پیشوای تمام  
چنان زندہ از جان بیدارو زمین روشن از روز بازار او

ستم گوش از پیه مرشد بیش  
زین و فک در دلایت مدش  
گوہ ملش و قوشہ دل ان پر زور  
شک نال دل زنگی نہ پیج  
دم ظن او چون صبا جان غواز  
نوشہ هر وقت ہمان نواز  
زنفایر روی آن آناتب  
پر پاک چنان دو دیده پر آب  
بد بار خلق ایج سپار تر  
کے نیست اذوی سکبار تر  
ہمان نو هر وقت پر فور باد نین ما داشش بیت مسحوباد.

(Shelter of the world, order of the true faith, a leader in the path of saintliness. The world is living because of his watchful spirit and the earth is glittering by the humming of his market. His footing place is more sublime than the seat of the throne. His foot have become sore by constant kissings yet he sits on a straw mat. His pocket is empty though his provision bag is full of gems. His belly is void but his heart is imbued with spiritual gems. By his noble manners he is pleasant and soul-reviving like the soothing breeze. His servants are always hospitable. By seeing the face of that shining sun looks of the pure remain full of tears. Although he bears the burden of common man's griefs yet there is none more unoccupied than he. May the world always remain occupied with his illumined existence and may his door remain always thronged by the people.)

MATHNAVI entitled '*Dewalrani & Khizar Khan*' was written in 715 A.H./AD 1315–16 and it contains 24 couplets in praise of the Shaikh preceding the eulogy of the monarch. As usual Khusro praises his mentor with utmost sincerity and heartfelt gratitude. Now Amir Khusro had become old and he prays for his irreproachable end:

نظام الدین حق فخرندہ ہی	کر دین حق گرفت از دی نظامی
زدهش در دو سالم روزگرانی	دو سالم مسلم کبی و مطانی
صلیش پون خبر در امر و در ہی	بیک پا یانشہ در از پیه اوی
بصدر خزر دیمن مند آرای	خزر پرسیده دشنه خزر پا
ہر سو گز دش بدوی رسیده	سزاران کو رفع از با پریده
کاہل مان سلام نام کریم	زہی بنت اور نشش بیسم

خندیا آن گردید بمندہ نام کرست الحسن بن حنفیت اعلیٰ  
بقرت ہمیشیں مصطفیٰ باد دران قرب ایسا شہر برا باد

(order of the true Faith, having auspicious name, with whom the true Faith has found a statute. Both the worlds are illumined by his knowledge, this world by his acquired knowledge and that world by his gifted perception. His conversations pronouncing the dos and don'ts are only one degree less than *wahy* or revelation. He sits in the foremost with Khizar and Isa. While Khizar kisses his hand, Khizar Khan kisses his feet. Wherever a slightest wave of his breath reaches, a thousand mountains of agony and grief disappear at once. I do not mention his cap, I would be fortunate if I die under his shoes. O Lord' that chosen servant of Thee who is the twin of sincerity may in Thy vicinity remain the companion of Mohammad and in that nearness be a place for us as attendant.)

SOME of the couplets in praise of the Skaikh do also contain valuable hints for his biographers e.g. one couplet speaks that the prayer of Solomon as occurs in the Quran (رَبَّ هَبْ لِي مُكَلَّا لَا يَتَبَقَّأ لِأَخْدُو مِنْ بَعْدِي) was engravened on his ring:

بر جین عرصہ ملک جمش آئیہ "هَبْ لِي" رسم نماش

(The entire span of the territory of Jamshed is under his rule and the Quranic verse '*Habli*' is written on his finger ring).

THE above *aya* means: 'Give me a kingdom such as may not befall any one after me.' (Quran:38:35:)

ANOTHER couplet indicates that the quadrangular cap (*chahar turki*) that was given by the Shaikh to his disciples and used by himself too, had a knot on it of the shape of Arabic letter ـ (ha).

نافر شاہان ٹکر اور نہ کہ بڑھش ہی ہوا فدہ کہ

(His cap is more prestigious than the crown of a monarch and in it the letter ha — indicating ﷺ remains as a knot.)

SIMILARLY a couplet hints at his staff that it used to be straight having no curves :

راست معاشرش پر شای بروز دیوکش و بلک مسازیل سر

(His staff is straight like a shooting star. It is the killer of evil spirits, nay the killer of Satan.)

APART from these couplets there are some other verses which can give valuable biographical hints.

AMEER Khusro sometimes used to recite his verses in praise of the Shaikh in his presence. Once he recited some verses and the Shaikh by way of appreciation asked him as to what kind of gift he would like to receive. His mentor Hazrat Shaikh Farid had also asked Shams Dabir after listening to his panegyric verses as to what type of gift he would like to have, and what else he actually needed? He had also suggested some alterations and corrections in his compositions. Shams Dabir had recommended that the Shaikh should pray for his economic well-being. Shaikh Farid offered prayers for him and consequently Shams Dabir got an appointment as tutor of king Balban's sons. Later he became the most influential man in the royal court. Following the same tradition Shaikh Nizam al-Din asked Ameer Khusro to speak of his wishes. Khusro readily submitted: 'I wish the sweetness in my verses. My poetry should be exquisitely amusing.' 'Go, there in my room', the Shaikh smilingly said, 'there is some sugar in a basin under my cot, bring it here.' Ameer went inside and fetched the bowl containing some sugar. 'Sprinkle a bit on yourself out of it', the Shaikh commanded, 'and also taste a bit of it.'<sup>17</sup> Ameer Khusro complied with his order and it is because of this blessings that sweetness has become a distinct feature of his poetry. Incidentally the chronogram of his death is also (*Tutie Shakkar Miqal*). طفی شکر مقال

LATER he used to repent and say why he did not ask something more precious from the Shaikh. Once the Shaikh had put his saliva on Khusro's lips as a sign of blessing.<sup>18</sup> It is indeed the generosity of the saint and his

blessings that Khusro in his life of 75 years wrote so much in prose and poetry that a small size library could be raised of his writings. He wrote *Ghazals*, *Qasidas*, *Mathnavis*, *Ruba'i*s, *Qata'at*, etc. not only in Persian but in Arabic, Turkish and Hindwi as well. He is supposed to be a maestro of Indian music and inventor of many a new specimen like *Kehmukarnis*, *Chaubolas*, *Dosukhna*, etc. The Shaikh was very fond of the famous *Khamsa* of Nizami Ganjvi and he used to ask people to read it out in his privacy. The Shaikh asked Ameer Khusro to imitate the *Khamsa* and Ameer Khusro composed his five *mathnavis* in the same manner as those of Nizami's.

THE author of *Sair al-Auliya* informs<sup>19</sup> us that Ameer Khusro and Qazi Moizz al-Din Paycha had also taken lesson of a treatise on rhetorics and prosody from the Shaikh and this statement is supported by the *Lataif-e Ashraf*, *usi*, conversations of Syed Ashraf Jehangir Samnani. Moreover, Khusro himself has admitted in the preface of *Ghurrat al-Kamal*, as in some of his panegyric verses, that he is a disciple of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya in poetics as well.

WHENVER Khusro compiled a new book he used to bring it.....copy before the Shaikh who having taken the work in his pious hands used to say: 'Let us read *Fatiha*' Then he recited the first Surah of the Quran and prayed for its popularity. Sometime he used to turn a few leafs of the book, and read it sporadically.

It was earnest desire of the Shaikh that Khusro should not remain confined to poetic art alone. He should instead keep in his sight some loftier and more sublime object. So notwithstanding his keen interest in writing prose and poetry and his regular attendance in the royal court and extensive travels of far off areas along with the troops, Khusro never neglected his spiritual development. Shaikh Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith of Delhi is right when he remarks that although Khusro had intimate links with the royal family and the nobility but his heart was attached to something else. This is evident from the delight that we get from his works because such blessings are not to be found in the works of sinful people and they do not get such common applause.<sup>20</sup>

ZIYAAAL-Din Barani who was an intimate friend of Ameer Khusro also testifies: 'Besides all his scholarship, eloquence and competency he was an upright Sufi. The major portion of his life was spent in offering prayers, observing fasts, recitation of the Holy Quran etc. He was singular in both type of religious observances i.e. w.f. '*Ibadat-e-Lazim* obligatory worship and '*Ibadat-e Mutaddi* whose benefit is extended to others like floating charitable endowments etc. He observed regular fasts and was among the most trusted disciples of the Shaikh. I have not come across any other adherent more sincere and more faithful than Khusro. He had got full share of divinely love, used to attend sufistic song (*sama*) and was man of ecstasy and passions of love. He was in perfect command of music and used to invent new *ragas* and tunes. Khusro had a poetic nature and was a tender hearted man of elegant taste. In every art which is connected with skill and refined taste, God had made him unique. He was absolutely matchless and his personality in this age was one of the wonders of time.'<sup>21</sup>

AMIR Khurd says that Khusro after having offered *tahajjud* prayers used to recite seven chapters of the Holy Quran every day. 'Tell me O Turk' the Shaikh asked him one day 'how do you find your devotion?' 'Sir, it so happens that sometimes I bitterly weep late in the night', Ameer Khusro submitted. 'Praise be to Allah, now some signs have started to emerge' the Shaikh gave him glad tidings.<sup>22</sup>

SOMETIMES Khusro used to go away from Delhi with the royal army. First he had travelled with prince Mohammad Khan-e Shahid, heir-apparent of Sultan Ghayath al-Din Balban to Multan and stayed there for about five years. Amir Hasan 'Ala Sijzi of Delhi, compiler of *Fawaid al-Fuad* was also attached to the court of Prince Mohammad Khan. Here fierce fighting broke out between the Mongols and the Indian army on 29th of Dhul Hijja 683 A.H./8th March AD 1285 and prince Mohammad Khan suddenly was killed in action. He was a perfect man, a genius, a patron of knowledge and fine arts, a cultured and good-mannered person. Contemporaries like Amir Hasan Dehlavi, Amir Khusro, Ziya al-Din Barani etc. have expressed deep sorrow and grief

over his untimely death and have written elegies both in poetry and in prose. Khusro had been captivated by the Mongol army who took him away to their land. It was intensely hot season. Hot wind and sandstorm were in full swing. One can imagine the climate of the deserts of Multan which turn into a mini hell during the summer. Ameer Khusro and his companions were extremely thirsty. After much toil they found some water in the desert. At this juncture Khusro was guided by his divine intellect that the enemies are thirsty, they would drink water to their entire satisfaction and later would suffer from pulmonic emphysema. So he sipped only a few draughts just to moisten his throat, while Mongol soldiers became inflated and fell unconscious on the spot. Khusro found an opportunity to escape from their grip. *Mujmale Fasihi* records this event but it says that Mongols had taken Ameer Khusro to their land and then his whereabouts could not be traced.' While Khusro had returned to Delhi in 684 A.H./AD 1285.

WHENEVER Khusro used to go away from Delhi, Nizam al-Din Auliya used to send letters to him full of affection and love. He addressed him as '*Turkullah*' and Khusro had preserved these letters with ~~almost~~ care. It was Khusro's will that those letters of the Shaikh should be kept in his shroud after his death so that Allah may shower His blessings on the Day of Atonement because of these sacred pieces of papers. It is, therefore, surmised that those letters were buried with their addressee. But the contents of some of these letters are found in *Sair at-Auliya* sporadically. One of the letters of the Shaikh addressed to Khusro reads:

بعد از حافظت جوارح از امور نامرضی شرع اجتناب نماید، و در مراحت  
ادفات هم کشیده و دمیر مزنگ، که سبب تحسیل کل موارد است، نیست  
شمرد، و روزگار را بطلات مصروف نگرداند، و اگر در ضمیر اش را خوبید،  
بچشم اش را شرعاً رود، که آن در طریقت اصل معبر است، در کل کارها  
بستگاره را قتل نماید”

(After gaurding your body against unlawful actions you  
should shun unpleasant things and should keep your  
time table attentively. This precious life which is the  
tool for attaining all aspirations should be valued and .

time should not be wasted in worthless trifles. If your conscience is satisfied you should follow it because this is credible in the Sufi way of life (*Tariqat*). In all affairs you should ask Allah for proper guidance.)

Generally, Amir Khusro visited the *Khanqah* of his Shaikh during the night time. When the Shaikh having offered his night prayers (*Isha*) relaxed in his bed, Khusro used to sit by his bed on the floor. At that time only a few most intimate persons, special attendants, and close relations of the Shaikh were allowed to enter the room. It was the time of informal chats like jokes, tales, riddles, reports from the royal court, fresh episodes, news and views, were the topics of this meeting. Khusro had spent all his life in the royal court and therefore he was master of delightful conversations and social etiquette. He could give extraordinary tinge to trivial and ordinary things as Maulana Altaf Husain Hali (d. 1914) says in his elegy of Mirza Ghalib (1797-1869):

وکھنون اور اس کا ایک شمول سوتھت اور اس کی سیدھی بات  
دل میں سبھت تھی وہ اگر پھل دن کو دن کہتا اور رات کو رات

(A thousand of formal and ceremonious words were excelled by his simple word. It touched our hearts even if he uttered as common a thing as to say if it was a day or it was a night.)

The same was the case with Khusro's sweet conversations. The Shaikh took keen and total interest in his narration and used to excite him every now and then saying : 'Then O Turk, what happened.'

AMEER Khusro had remained attached to the court of several monarchs most of whom had ascended the throne after assassinating their predecessors. But Khusro's career remained blotless, free from any conspiracy or intrigue. That is why he could continue in all conditions. Similarly in the *Khanqah* of the Shaikh he remained popular with all inmates and no disciple or servant of the Shaikh ever complained of any misbehaviour on his part. Instead, Khusro extended every help to his fellow inmates and used to plead their cases before the Shaikh. One day, while he entered the *Khanqah* after the night prayers, he found Ali bin

Mahmood Jandar sitting in the *Jamat Khana*. After exchange of greetings Khusro wittily asked: 'You were extremely fond of chess. All the time you passed in playing it. Now what has happened to you ?'

'Yes, it is true, my brother, I was so fond of chess that I would not have given it up even if I were in the Hajj pilgrimage,' was the answer of Ali bin Mahmood, 'but ever since I have been initiated into the *silsilah* I do not even think of it.' Ameer Khusro repeated this dialogue before the Shaikh, who had a piece of pomegranate with him which he granted to Khusro and said: 'Go downstairs and eat it with Ali bin Mahmood.'

If any disciple or any successor of the Shaikh wanted to submit anything to the Shaikh and did not find enough courage to face him personally he used to acquire the services of Ameer Khusro to mediate. In this connection two episodes are well known. Shaikh Burhan al-Din Gharib Hanswī (d. 738 A.H./AD 1337) was supervisor of the kitchen of the *Khanqah*. He was a thin and feeble old man who had passed his 70s. He used to sit on a mat in the kitchen but since he had little flesh on his body he used to feel uncomfortable while sitting on the mat. For this reason he made a blanket fourfold to make a seat of it. One day, 'Ali Zanbili and Malik Nusrat, the two courtiers of Allauddin Khalji who were the disciples of the Shaikh, slandered in the assembly of the Shaikh that Burhan al-Din Gharib sits in the kitchen like the Shaikh of the *Khanqah* on the blanket. The Shaikh took a strong note of it and sent immediately his attendant Iqbal to communicate to Burhan al-Din Gharib that he should leave the Khanqah at once. Gharib was extremely perturbed on hearing this. Complying to the order of the Shaikh he left the Khanqah and came to the house of Maulana Ibrahim Tashtdar where he stayed for a couple of days. But after all nobody could have offered asylum to a person reproved by the Shaikh, so Maulana Ibrahim also wished to be excused and said if the Shaikh came to know that I have given you asylum in my house he will be annoyed. It is better you go to the city.' Gharib deeply aggrieved and mentally disturbed came to his house and wept bitterly. Friends who visited him to console could not control their tears when they saw him in such a miserable condition. Ameer Khusro, Nasir al-Din

Mahmood Chiragh-e Delhi and Burhan al-Din Gharib were intimate friends. Khusro approached the Shaikh on behalf of Gharib and prayed for his mercy but the Shaikh was quite displeased. Finally, some friends decided that Khusro should appear before the Shaikh with his turban hanging in his neck which was the sign of confession of guilt. When the Shaikh saw Khusro in this guise of a guilty man he asked: 'What is it O Turk ?' Then Khusro submitted that the crime perpetrated by Gharib be kindly forgiven. The Shaikh smilingly asked: 'Where is he?' He was immediately summoned from his house. Both Khusro and Gharib appeared again in the same guise before the Shaikh and stood in the nook of the cell. The Shaikh now pardoned Maulana Gharib and initiated him into the *silsilah* afresh. This reproof was simply to frighten him from becoming self-made *Sajjada Nashin* or even from imitating it. We should see our faces in this mirror how shamelessly and unscrupulously we pretend to be the *Sajjada Nashin* of any Shaikh without proper authority.

THE second episode belongs to Shaikh Nasir al-Din Mahmood Chiragh-e Delhi. He once said to Khusro: 'You have got influence on the Shaikh. At some appropriate time please submit to him on my behalf that I live in Ayodhya (Faizabad) and do not find enough time for prayers and devotion because of continuous rush of the visitors. If the Shaikh permits me I would like to have my abode in some desert or a cave in some mountain so that I could devote myself entirely to worship and meditation. Ameer Khusro submitted this request after the night prayers and the Shaikh replied:

• اورا بھی تاریخ میں ہی چیز بدوجاد تھی ختن می باجے کشید و  
کنات آں پر بدل دایشاد و حطای پاچے کر دی

(Tell him he should live among the people and should bear their atrocities just to recompense them with generosity and magnanimity).

This is simply self-delusion' the Shaikh explained. His inner self wanted leisurely life in the name of sitting in some cave for devotion. One becomes famous after sitting in seclusion and people throng to him. The Shaikh aimed at the amelioration of the society and not merely for

individual salvation, so he cautioned Chiragh-e Delhi on this idea.

THE remarks made by the Shaikh on Khusro from time to time or the compassion he showed at various occasions were committed by Khusro in black and white. It must have become a treatise of considerable length. Some of its excerpts have been quoted by the author of *Sair al-Auliya* but the main treatise is now extinct. It was perhaps placed in the coffin of Khusro at the time of his burial as had been his last will.

ONCE someone submitted to the Shaikh: 'You shower such kindness and blessing on Khusro, I also pray for an iota of those blessings.' The Shaikh was so cultured that keeping in view his disappointment, he did not say anything. But when the person left the place, the Shaikh said to those presents 'It occurred to my mind that I should say to this man, first he should cultivate such qualities in him.'<sup>28</sup>

'You should pray for my life' the Shaikh used to say to Ameer Khusro, 'because you will not survive me.' Once the Shaikh said to Amir Khusro: 'You should be buried by my side and *Insha Allah* it will so happen. I have undertaken a pledge with Allah that when they ~~would~~ escort me toward paradise I will take you with me'. Once the Shaikh saw in a dream that a canal was flowing beneath the *Manda* Bridge and in front of the house of Shaikh Najib al-Din Mutawakkil. Its water was pure and crystal. The Shaikh was sitting on a shop at some height. The atmosphere was quite pleasant. The Shaikh suddenly aspired for something and recalled Ameer Khusro. At that exquisite moment the Shaikh asked for some rare blessing for Khusro and realised instantly that the prayer was granted. The Shaikh assured Khusro afterwards saying: *Insha Allah* you will reach that state of spiritual sublimity.'<sup>29</sup>

'It occurred to my mind tonight the Shaikh once pronounced, 'Khusro is not the name of *dervishes* so he be called '*Mohammad Kasa Les*' from today. 'This title has been conferred on me from the world invisible', Khusro later wrote, 'and has been conveyed by the True Messenger peace be on him, I expect so many other blessings to come because of this title.'

<sup>30</sup>

ONE day the Shaikh conversed to Ameer Khusro : 'Yesterday, on Friday night, I saw a dream. Shaikh Sadr al-Din Arif son of Shaikh Baha al-Din Zakariyya of Multan has come and I have received him with full honour and respect. He has also displayed extraordinary regard and respect which is beyond description. In the meantime I visioned that you came from some distant place. On approaching us you started description of gnosis and acquaintance. At the same moment Salih Muazzin gave call for morning prayers and I woke up.' After having narrated the vision, the Shaikh asked: 'Tell me now, what spiritual status is it' ? Ameer Khusro submitted with utmost humility: 'I am a sweeper of your house. I cannot assess this status. Everything that I have got has been granted by you.' After hearing this reply Shaikh started weeping aloud and with him Khusro also cried.

WHEN they stopped wailing, the Shaikh bestowed his personal cap on Khusro and put his special clothes on him with his own hands and advised him to study the *mafuz* (conversations) of the saints very often.<sup>31</sup>

The Shaikh has also composed some verses in praise of Khusro. One of his quatrains has been quoted by Amir Khurd Kirmani in *Sair al-Auliya*:

غورو کر بنظم و نثر شلش کم ناست۔ ملکیتِ الگب سخن آں خرو راست۔  
این خرو راست، نام خرد نیست۔ زیر اک خندانی نام خرو راست۔

(Khusro, like whom in prose and poetry has rarely born, is the master of the realm of literature. It is our Khusro and not Nasir Khusro, because Allah is the *Nasir* (helper) of our Khusro).

In the gatherings of Sufi songs (*Sama'*) there used to be a rage because of Khusro. When the Shaikh came in the state of ecstasy Khusro started singing himself. Once Khusro invited some of his friends at the residence of Syed Mohammad Kirmani in Ghayathpur. The Shaikh and some other saints of the city were present. Bahlul Qawwal started the *ghazal* of Amir Hasan:

زی فری ک از غبای ابوی کان پیدا کند پہن زندگی  
بکش رومنی کی جائی گیہدہ مرامیزی کہست اندر حالم

AFTER the Sama Amir Khusro recited his own *ghazal* but could not read it beyond its opening line and shifted to the *ghazal* of Shaikh Sa'di

معلمت بر خونی دلبری آنوت جنا و ناز و حاتب دستم گردی آنوت

(Thy teacher has taught you coquetry and dalliance and taught you repression, tyranny and reproval, nothing else.)

At that time the whole assembly was in the grip of a rare ecstasy. 'Why didn't you recite your own *ghazal*?' Someone asked Khusro afterwards, 'I was overwhelmed' Khusro replied, 'so much so that when I started reciting my verses I was steeped in overflowing emotions that were beyond my control.'<sup>32</sup>

KHUSRO resumed his journey to Oudh and Bengal for the third time in 724 A.H./AD 1324 Ghiyath al-Din Tughlaq leaving behind Ulugh Khan in Delhi, had made an expedition to Bengal with a strong army contingent to crush the rebels there. Nasir al-Din, Governor of Lakhnauti, appeared before him in Turhat and assured of his obedience. After setting the administration aright the Emperor left for Delhi and was crashed in Afghanpur near Delhi as the wooden palace made for his stay had crumbled. This happened in Rabi-I-725 A.H./ March AD 1325.

AMIR Khusro while he was leaving for Bengal had found his Shaikh very weak and in fragile health. He must have made certain arrangements to get posted with his condition every now and then. When he received the news of the Shaikh's serious illness followed by his death he immediately started for Delhi and reached there in shortest possible time. He was clad in black clothes: his collar was open, hair matted and unkempt. He came straight to the grave of his mentor and the beloved Shaikh, embraced his grave and shed tears copiously and profusely. Then he said to those present: 'What am I to wail for this monarch, I am lamenting my own fate, because I will not survive him any longer.'

During the same time he composed a long and pathetic elegy which is found in some of the manuscripts of *Nihayat al-Kamal*.<sup>33</sup> He had forsaken all his wits, his poetic genius was now dead and his proverbial spirit a thing of the past. One who used to enliven the entire gathering had now turned into an embodiment of sorrow and bereavement. He sat near the Shaikh's grave as *mujawir* and became totally detached from the world around him. After six months, on Wednesday of Shawwal 725 A.H./25th September AD 1325 Khusro also passed away and was laid to rest in the rear of his Shaikh's tomb. According to Jamali Dehlavi Khusro died three months after his<sup>34</sup> Shaikh that is in Rajab 725 A.H./ June AD 1325 while Ferishta without describing his source of information says that Khusro died on Friday 29th Dhi qadah 725 A.H./ 6th November AD 1325 i.e. he remained alive for nearly seven months after the death of his Shaikh. But apparently Ferishta was mistaken and the statement of *Sair al-Auliya* is more authentic and reliable in this regard.<sup>35</sup>

### **Notes and References**

1. Kirmani (Amir Khurd) *Sair Al-Auliya*, Muhibb-e Hind Press Delhi, Page 312 correct title of the book is 'Sair al -Auliya fi Mahabbat al-Haqq Jalla wa 'Ala' as recorded on p. 24.
2. ibid P. 313.
3. *Lata if-e Ahrafi* vol I p. 360, vol. II p. 370.
4. Wahid Mirza : *Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, p. 16.
5. *Sair al-Auliya*, p. 311 6. ibid p. 126.
6. For detailed study see my article on *Afzal al-Fawaid* in 'Amir Khusro : Ahwal-o Athar (ed. Dr. N.H. Ansari) pp. 345-369.
7. *Fawa'id al Fu'ad* (ed. Latif Malik) Lahore, p. 9.
8. Jamali Dehlavi: *Siyar al-Arifin* (Urdu tr. By M. Ayyub Qadiri) p. 87 It records the name as "A 'azz al-Din 'Ali Shah, but the correct form is 'Izz al-Din
9. Wahid Mirza : *Life & Works of Amir Khusrau*, p. 17.
10. His son Mohammad passed away during the lifetime of Khusro. His elegy is found in the Diwan *Ghurrat al-Kamal*. Another son Haji also died afterwards and his elegy

is recorded in the *Diwan Nihayat al Kamal*

- 11 Akbar Husaini (Syed Mohammad) *Jawami al Kalimi* Intizami press, Hyderabad
- 12 Barani (Ziya al Din) *Tarikh e Furoze Shahi* (Urdu tr Dr Moin ul Haq) Lahore
- 13 *Fawa id al Fuad* op cit p 242
- 14 *Sau al-Auhya* P 311
- 16 *Dibacha Diwan Ghurrat al Kamal*, p 45
- 17 *Sau al-Auhya* p 311-312
- 18 Mathnavi 'Nuh Sipehi'
- 19 *Sau al-Auhya* p 311
- 20 *Akhbar al Akhyar* (Matba Mujtabai Delhi) p 99
- 21 Barani *Tarikh e Furoze Shahi* (Urdu tr) p 522
- 22 *Sau al-Auhya* p 312
- 23 *Mujmal e Iqbal* (Tehran)
- 24 *Akhbar al Akhyar* p 99
- 25 *Durar-e-Ni'ami* ms Salat Lang Museum Library Hyderabad
- 26 *Sau al-Auhya* pp 289 290
- 27 ibid p 247
- 28 ibid p 312
- 29 ibid p 313
- 30 ibid p 313
- 31 ibid p 314
- 32 ibid P 314
- 33 A manuscript of *Nihayat al Kamal* is preserved in the Punjab University Library, Lahore and includes this long elegy which has been cited in full by Dr Altaf Asghar in his article entitled *Elegy writing of Aamir Khushro And the Elegy of Hazrat Khwaja Nizam al Din Aulta* (Majallae Lehqaq vol 1 Nos 3-4 Faculty of Islamic and Oriental Studies Punjab University Lahore) 1979
- 34 *Siyar al Arifin* (Urdu tr) p 124 According to Jamali Khusro left Bengal without obtaining formal permission from the Emperor. But I am of the opinion that Ghiyath al Din Lughlaq had left Bengal even before Khusro which is evident by the fact that he died under the wooden palace in Alghanpur before the death of Hazrat Nizam al-Din Aulta
- 35 *Sau al-Auhya* p 315



# **Role of Social Service and Women in Sufism**

**In the Light of Mu'jam Al-Safar of Hafiz Abu Tahir  
Al-Silafi Al-Isbahani**

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**S.M. Zaman**

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## **Role of Social Service**

**H**AFIZ Abu Tahir Ahmad bin Mohammad al-Silafi al-Isbahani<sup>1</sup> (d. 576/1180), widely acclaimed in his own lifetime as one of the most distinguished traditionalists (*muhaddith*) of his age, bequeathed to posterity a large corpus of writings on a variety of subjects related mainly to *Hadith* and its subsidiary disciplines. A celebrated authority on the *Rijal*, his *Mu'jam al-Safar*,<sup>1</sup> like his earlier works *Mu'jam al-Isbahaniyyin* and *al-Mashyakha al-Baghdaadiyya*, was quoted profusely by eminent scholars such as al-Dhahabi and Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. *Mu'jam al Safar*, unlike most works of its genre, is not simply a roster of his *Hadith* authorities, with short biographical sketches accompanying the reports received from them, but a collection of delightful fragments of poetry to suit a variety of tastes, and fascinating anecdotes of poets, litterateurs, scholars and Sufis, all interspersed with valuable pieces of information for the literary historian and his counterpart in social history.

## Value of *Mu'jam al-Safar* as a Source for Contemporary Sufism

SILAFI's interest in Sufism and the value of *Mu'jam al-Safar* as a source for the history of contemporary Sufism, are both evident in the substantial material pertaining to this subject interspersed in this work. Biographical notices of sixty-four contemporary Sufis, twenty-four anecdotes, and thirty-three reports comprising the sayings of distinguished Sufis, make it a valuable source, a fact which becomes even more meaningful when we consider the paucity of information relevant to this period in the sources already available.

THE last *tabaqa* (i.e., the fifth) in the *Tabaqat al-Sufiyya* of Sulami (d. 421/1031) deals with the Sufis who died between 341/952 and 378/988. The celebrated work of Abu Nu'aym (d.430/1038) also does not go beyond the fourth/tenth century.<sup>2</sup> Among those noticed by Abul-Qasim al-Qushayri (d. 465/1072) in his *al-Risala*, the last to die was Abu Uthman Said b. Sallam al-Maghribi (d.373/983). 'Abdullah Ansari (d. 481/1088), the author of *Tabaqat al -Sufiyya*, has noticed some Sufis who died early in the fifth century,<sup>3</sup> but on the whole his work deals mostly with the people who lived in the fourth/tenth century.<sup>4</sup> Most biographies in his sixth *tabaqa* (the last one) died in the fourth century. The only notices in the *Tadhkirat al-Awliya* of Fard al-Din Attar (d. first half of the 7th/13th century) belonging to Sufis who died in the fifth/eleventh century are those of Abu Said bin Abul Khayr (d. 440/1049),<sup>5</sup> Abu Ishaq al-Kazaruni (d. 426/1034),<sup>6</sup> and perhaps Abul-Abbas al-Nahawandi.<sup>7</sup>

THE author of *Kashf al-Mahjub*, besides noticing Abul-Qasim al-Qushayri (d. 465/1072),<sup>8</sup> Abu Said,<sup>9</sup> Abul-Qasim al-Kurkani<sup>10</sup> (d. 469/1076), and his own teacher, Abul-Fadl Mohammad bin al-Hasan al-Khuttali,<sup>11</sup> devotes a small section<sup>12</sup> to a brief mention of his contemporary Sufis, but it is just a list of names with some complimentary remarks. The *Nafahat al-Us* of Jami (d. 898/1494) lists more names, but the information supplied is usually not exact and precise; besides, dates are rarely mentioned.<sup>13</sup>

Most of the Sufis noticed by Silafi are, in so far as I have been able to ascertain, not mentioned by other sources available to us. The veracity and accuracy of reporting, for which Silafi is famous, is another merit. His information is based on his own observation, or taken from the biographies themselves or people who had seen them.

In addition to its value for the biographer, *Mu'jam al-Safar* holds even greater interest for us on account of the useful clues it supplies to the study of certain aspects of Sufism and the appraisal of certain significant developments taking place in the fifth-sixth AH eleventh-twelfth AD centuries. Consideration of space constrains me to confine the present discussion to two themes only.

### **Khidma : A Salient Feature of 5th-6th AH or 11th-12th Century AD Sufism**

'SOCIAL responsibility, born out of love of God, is one of the most important sides of early Sufism'<sup>14</sup>, but a sharp consciousness of its relevance to the spiritual evolution becomes visible in the fourth/tenth century. Sufis like Ibn Khafif (d. 371/981) placed special emphasis on social service (*Khidma*) and made it an integral and perhaps even the most important part of Sufi life. It may even be said that the appearance of a large number of *ribats* and *duwayras* all over the Islamic world was both an instrument for the institutionalization and practice of this principle, as well as a consequence of its realization, which necessitated the creation of channels whereby *Khidma* could be practised and transmitted to the Sufi neophytes. Thus it served as an incentive for the founding of these establishments, where the head or supervisor, characteristically called *Khadim al-Ribat* rather than *Sahib al-Ribat* (Master of Inn) served the Sufis, residents (*muqimun*) as well as travellers (*musafirun*). This development was responsible, perhaps more than anything else, in popularizing Sufism within Islam on the one hand, and making Sufism a strong force for the propagation of Islam on the other. Sufis, in organized orders, appear everywhere as

the most successful missionaries of Islam. Unfortunately, our preoccupation with the theosophical and speculative side of Sufism, and our enthusiasm to discover seeds of Sufism in every religion and culture except Islam, have kept us from paying sufficient attention to such important factors which really made Sufism one of the most potent forces in Islamic history.

THE concept of social service like several other tenets of Sufism was not foreign to Islam. It seems, however, to have been especially accentuated and emphasized by Sufis of the fourth-fifth AH or tenth-eleventh AD centuries, just as the early ascetics had exaggerated the element of 'fear of God.' Obligatory prayers were necessary; supererogatory devotions and ascetic practices were desirable for subjugating the lower soul and purifying the heart. But the surest way of successfully traversing difficult stages of the Sufi path was *Khidma*, without which formal and ritualistic *Ibada* remained fruitless. This idea is put across in the sayings of several Sufis of this period. Muhammad bin 'Ali-al Kattani (d. 322/933) is reported to have said:<sup>15</sup>

I heard Mohammad bin Yaqub say: 'I endured the sufferings of devotional exercises (*ibada*) for fifty years, yet did not find the truth (*al-haqiqah*). Then I received a call saying: Become a servant and get comfort. So I abandoned trickery (*ihtiyal*) and choice (*ikhtiyar*), and clung to humility (*dhillah*) and need (*iftiqar*); thus I found comfort.'

ANOTHER anecdote narrated by Silafi brings home the importance attached to *Khidma* in more explicit terms. Abdul Karim b. Dushmanziyar told Silafi that he heard Daud al-Khadim say:<sup>16</sup>

I heard Abul-Husain 'Abdul-Wahab bin Ahmad bin Saliba say in Fars,<sup>17</sup> 'I stayed with Abul Hasan al-Sirawani<sup>18</sup> for several years fasting all days and praying all nights, but he never paid any attention to me. One day I swept the *ribat* and he said: 'May God

help thee, O Ibn Saliba.' He (i.e. Ibn Saliba) believed that he attained to that to which he attained with the grace of his (i.e. Sirawani's) blessing, and he was (i.e. Ibn Saliba) called Shaykh al-Shuyukh.'<sup>19</sup>

THE importance, which came to be attached to this aspect of Sufi discipline, can be gauged from the following report recorded in *Mu'jam al-Safar*. Silafi says,<sup>20</sup>

I heard Abu Amr Uthman bin Umar...say in Madinat al-Qasr: 'The advice of my father to me and to his *murids* was to go to the utmost limit in the service of those visiting Sufis who came to us. He used to say, 'If any one of you is guilty of negligence on their behalf, and one of them takes hold of his hair and strikes him, and he clings to his hand to prevent him from striking him, he is ostracized and has nothing to do with me.'

IN another report Silafi tells us,

I heard Abul-Fadl Tahir bin Al-Husain bin Mamman... say, 'I heard Abu Hafs Umar bin Jabar al-Duni say in al-Dun, I heard Shaykh Abu Abd Allah al-Husayn bin Ali bin Ahmad al-Duni say, 'My advice to my *ashab* (i.e. disciples) is that they discharge the duties they owe to God, abandon the claims of their own selves, and pay heed to the *murids* and their service.'<sup>21</sup>

SIMILAR instances can be multiplied.<sup>22</sup> Sufi manuals of this and the following epochs are filled with instructions and injunctions to be observed in providing service to the guests visiting the *ribats*.<sup>23</sup> The phenomenal spread of these *ribats* during this period is a pointer to the important position the institution of *Khidma* came to occupy in Sufi life.<sup>24</sup>

THE extension of this principle beyond the membership of Sufi Fraternities, not only to Muslims but also to non-Muslims,<sup>25</sup> and even to animals by way of showing kindness to them,<sup>26</sup> eventually became

one of the most important factors in the spread of *tasawwuf*, its influence, and popularity.

### The Role of Women in 5th-6th AH or 11th-12th AD Sufism

WOMAN, with the purity and tenderness of her feminine response to love, mundane as well as divine, makes her appearance in the hagiologies of all faiths and cultures. With the very mention of Islamic asceticism and *tasawwuf*, the name of Rabia Adawiyya (d. 185/801) of Basra, flashes across one's mind. In the impressive array of feminine names in Ibn al-Jawzi's *Sifat al-Safwa*<sup>27</sup> and the ladies in the last chapter of Jami's *Nafahat*,<sup>28</sup> we find ample evidence of the prominent role that women played in the evolution of Muslim mysticism.

AMONG the valuable bits of information on this subject, supplied in *Muj'am al-Safar* is the exciting account of a Sufi *Shaykha*, called Amina Sardarudhiyya, transmitted to Silafi by Abu Tahir Ali bin Tahir al-Jarbadhqani, who said,

I was with a group of Sufi brethren. They went to see Amina Sardarudhiyya. I said (to myself ?), 'Our condition has reached this extremity that we go for the blessings of seeing a woman!' When we entered her apartment, she spoke—and I went into state of ecstasy (*fa-taba waqtī*) and gave out a scream. She said: 'Be quiet, O imposter, this does not conform to what you said on the way.' I stood up and begged her forgiveness. Later, I witnessed several amazing miracles (*karamat*) performed by her.<sup>29</sup>

Pious and devout ladies with strong ascetic tendencies were not rare in the history of Islam, and like Rabia<sup>30</sup> some preferred to remain in the state of celibacy.<sup>31</sup> Khadija (alias Mulayha), daughter of Abul Abbas al-Razi, a prominent traditionalist and jurisconsult of

Alexandria, was one of them. She was a traditionalist of some importance herself and transmitted *hadith* to Silafi. It was her practice to keep vigil all night. She died in 526/1131, and Silafi led her funeral prayers according to her will.

But the existence of women-saints like 'Amina Sardarudhiyya, who preached to devotees of both sexes, or more modest characters like Khadija, who spent their lives in celibacy and rigorous devotions, was not a phenomenon new and exclusive to this period. The important question is whether a class of women Sufis, formally initiated into the fraternity, bound in allegiance to a spiritual guide, wearing *muraqqaas* or *khirqas*, living permanently or temporarily in establishments comparable to *ribats*, but exclusive to them for their own spiritual discipline, ever existed? Prof. Schimmel has noted the existence of a *ribat* in Cairo, known as the Ribat al-Baghdadiyya which, according to Maqrizi,<sup>32</sup> was 'Founded in 684/1285 by the daughter of Baybars; it also served as a house of refuge for the divorced women, who could stay there until they remarried. Its inspector was, at least up to 806 AH or AD 1403 a Hanafite *qadi*'.<sup>33</sup> According to Ibn Taghribirdi,<sup>34</sup> a woman Shaykha, widow of the deceased Shaykh Qilich al-Rumi was appointed by Qaytbay as the head of a hospice he had founded.<sup>35</sup>

It is not clear, however, whether the hospice was designed for the residence of women devotees. Even if the Ribat al-Baghdadiyya was primarily a monastery for the Sufi women, besides serving the additional function of a home for divorcees and possibly also widows, the question still remains whether such institutions existed before this date, and it is here that the value of information supplied in the extremely important notice of Umm Ahmad Zulaykha bin Ilyas bin Faris bin Ismail al-Ghaznawiyah l-Waiz in *Mu'jam al-Safar* becomes evident. Silafi met her in Sawa, wrote *hadith* from her and gave the following particulars concerning her:

She told me that she heard *hadith* from Sadd al-Zanjanī,<sup>36</sup> Hayyaj<sup>37</sup> and other *Shuyukh* of Mecca

where she spent many years in devotional residence. Then she moved to the city of Sawa. She used to preach wearing a *muraqqau* in the monastery (*duwayra*) of women.<sup>38</sup>

THIS information about the existence of a *duwayrat al-nisa* in the latter part of the fifth AH eleventh century AD in a flourishing city of Khurasan is in itself a significant addition to our knowledge. It is not clear whether this was a regular hospice parallel to other Sufi *ribats* and *duwayras* where Sufis remained in residence, or was used only as a meeting-place for women, especially those of Sufi inclinations or affiliations, to assemble and listen to such Sufi preachers as Zulaykha; the use of the word *duwayra*, however, gives some preference to the first assumption.

ANOTHER point worth consideration is the casual manner in which Silafi mentions this *duwayra*. If it was the only one of its type, in all probability he would have mentioned this fact and given some particulars about it. It will not be going too far to assume that such establishments were not rare.

WE have seen in the account of Amina Sardarudhiyya how women saints were visited by groups of devotees, men and women. The converse practice was also true. This circumstance was perhaps exploited by some unscrupulous black sheep in the Sufi circles, who played the devil's game under the cloak of *tasawwuf*. The severest attack of Sufis by Ibn al-Jawzi<sup>39</sup> may be explained as having its origin in the disreputable activities of such impostors.

### **Notes and References**

1. A critical edition of this work was first prepared by the author of this paper and presented to Harvard University in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Ph.D. degree in 1968. (Islamabad, IRI, 1987; pp. 683+157).

2. Cf Arberry, (London, 1950), *Sufism*, p.70 He remarks about *Hilyat al-Awliya*. '... The three concluding volumes and especially the last two are replete with the most careful documentation of mysticism in the ninth and tenth centuries.'
3. e.g., Abul-Tayyib Sahl bin Mohammad al Suluki, who died in Nishapur in 404/1013 (Ansari, *Tabaqat*, pp. 697-8, in the sixth *tabaqqa*).
4. e.g., Abu Bakr al-Susi (d.386/996), p. 492; Abu Bakr Ahmad bin Mohammad al-Tarsusi (d. 374/984), p.486; Abul-Hasan al-Sirawani, who lived for 124 years is at the head of the sixth *tabaqqa*, p. 482.
5. Attar, *Tadhkirat al-Awliya*, II, 322-337.
6. ibid., II, 291-304.
7. ibid., II, 319-322.
8. Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjub*, trans. R.A Nicholson, p.167.
9. ibid., p. 164.
10. ibid., p. 169.
11. ibid., p. 166.
12. ibid., pp. 172-175.
13. Moreover it is not a contemporary source for the fifth-sixth AH or eleventh-twelfth centuries AD
14. A. Schimmel. 'Ibn Khafif: An Early Representative of Sufism', *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol. VI pt.3 (July, 1958), p. 173.
15. *Mu'jam al-Safar*, para.1116.
16. Abul-Tawaris Daud bin Mohammad bin 'Abdullah al Ijli, alias Daud al-Khadim, was a prominent disciple of Abu Ishaq al-Kazaruni (d. 426/1034), and his descendants were the custodians of al-Kazaruni's *khirqa* (see *Fudaws al-Murshidiyya*, p. 473). He was the maternal uncle and *Shaykh* of Abu Mohammad Mankil bin Mohammad bin Sulayman al-Zizzi, who is noticed by Silafi (*Mu'jam al-Safar* para. 1307-9). Abul-Mafakhir al-Bakharzi (d. 736/1335) in his spiritual genealogy recorded in the introduction to his *Awwad al-Ahbab* (p. 27) mentions both Mohammad bin Mankil (which I think is an inadvertent inversion of Mankil bin Mohammad) and his shaykh Daud bin Mohammad alias Khadim al-Fuqara. But according to him Daud received his *khirqa* from Abul-Abbas bin Idris; he makes no mention of Abu Ishaq al-Kazaruni. Daud is mentioned also in paras. 361-2, 498, 624 and 1309 of *Mu'jam al-Safar*. Silafi tells us ...at Daud and his followers maintained fifty-five *ribats*.
17. Al-Hujwiri (d. between 465/1072 and 469/1076 ?) mentions Abul-Hasan bin Saliba in the biographical sketch of his own shaykh Abul-Fadl Mohammad bin Al-Hasan al-Khuttali as his contemporary (*Kashf*, p. 166), and notices him again in the chapter

Speaking of the *shuyukh* of Fars, he says: 'The Grand Shaykh, Abul-Hasan b. Saliba, spoke with the utmost elegance of Sufism and with extreme lucidity on unification (tawhid). His sayings are well-known' (*ibid.*, p.172). Also see *Nafahat*, p. 279, where Jami, like Silafi, states his *kunya* as Abul-Husayn. Some more sayings of this shaykh are reported in paras 794 and 1051 of *Mu'jam al-Safar*.

18. 'Ali bin Jafar bin Daud. Hujwirn's *shaykh*, al-Khuttali had consorted with him (*Kashf*, p.166). He associated with Abu Bakr al-Shibli (d. 334/946) and Junayd (d. 298/910); see al-Sulami, *Tabaqat*, pp. 346 and 344. He was also a contemporary of Abu Bakr Ahmad bin Mohammad al-Tarsusi (d. 374/984); see Ansari, *Tabaqat*, p. 487. Ansari devotes a notice to him in his *Tabaqat* (pp. 482-485), but his dates are not mentioned. According to Sulami (d. 421/1031), he lived to an age of 124 years (Ansari, *Tabaqat*, p. 482). Thus we may conclude that he was born around 280/893 at the latest (since he associated with Junayd) and died around the turn of the century (400/1009).
  19. *Mu'jam al-Safar*, para. 624.
  20. *ibid.*, para 806.
  21. *ibid.*, para 396.
  22. *ibid.*, paras. 1324, 500, 1308, 1408, 1516.
  23. Al-Hujwiri says: 'When a traveller comes to them, they must meet him joyfully and receive him with respect and treat him like an honoured guest and freely set before him whatever food they have, modelling their behaviour upon that of Abraham. They must not inquire whence he has come or whether he is going or what is his name, but must deem that he has come from God and is going to God and that his name is 'servant of God'...' (*Kashf*, pp. 341-2).
  24. Ibn Khafif also refers to (Sulami, *Tabaqat*, p. 488; Attar, *Tadhkira*, II, 131). Attar also relates the following story about him: 'Shaykh received a traveller who was suffering from diarrhoea and he looked after him and did not have a wink of sleep.' One of the bequests of Abu Ishaq al-Kazaruni (d. 426/1034) to his disciples was (*ibid.*, II, 303) 'If a strange traveller comes to the monastery you should arrange to receive him with honour and dignity and sit with him and you should retire to another corner.' Qushayri (d. 465/1072) also stresses the importance of *khidma* in the passage at p. 203 in *al-Risala* P. 203).
- According to Kashani (d. 735/1334), rendering service to the *fuqara* gets precedence over supererogatory devotions (nawafil). Defining *Khuddam* he says (*Misbah al-Hidaya* p. 119), 'But *Khuddam* (Servants) is the class of persons whose avocation is to serve *fuqara* of seekers of Truth and who attend to them first and then to their own affairs.'
25. See 'Attar, *Tadhkira*, II, 295 and Muhsin bin 'Uthman, *Firdawas al-Murshidiyya*, p. 172, for a story of Kazaruni's hospitality to a few.
  26. Ibn Khafif's kindness to a dog, see Arberry, *Shiraz*, p. 77; also 'Attar, *Tadhkira*, II, 296; and Bakharzi, *Awrad* p. 32.

27. Ibn al-Jawzi, *Sifat al-Safwa*, II, 2-41, 113-16, 155-59, 170-71, 293-99; III, 115-22; IV, 13-35, 36-40, 55-57, 59-60, 88, 101-2, 162-64, 170-72, 224-26, 261, 266-80, 301-2, 319-20, 327, 338-39, 347-58, 369, 373-78, 385-88, 394-405.
28. Jami, *Nafahat*, pp. 615-634.
29. *Mu'jam al-Safar*, para 862.
30. Declining offers of marriage, she is said to have declared: 'The contract of marriage is for those who have a phenomenal existence. But in my case, there is no such existence, for I have ceased to exist and have passed out of self. I exist in God and am altogether His. I live in the shadow of His command. The marriage contract must be asked for from Him, not from me.' Attar, *Tadhkira*, I, 66, quoted by A.J. Arberry in *Sufism*, p. 42.
31. This tendency, obviously an influence of Christianity, becomes more marked in the fourth-fifth AH or tenth-eleventh AD centuries (as Prof. Gibb already noted: *Muhammadanism*, p. 137) and was by no means confined to women. Fudayl bin Iyad (d. 187/803) although married (Abu Nuaym mentions the death of his son Ali, see *Hilya*, VIII, 100) is reported to have said: 'If thou hadst known death truly, thou wouldst never have married, or desired children' (A.J. Arberry, *Sufism*, p.42 quoting *Hilya*. VIII. 85). Al-Kazaruni (d. 426/1034) remained unmarried, but advised those who feared the 'invasion of desire', to get married.

Hujwiri devotes a full chapter to the discussion of marriage and celibacy (*Kashf al-Mahjub*, pp. 360-66). He observes (p. 363): 'In our times it is impossible for any one to have a suitable wife, whose wants are not excessive, and whose demands are not unreasonable. Therefore many persons have adopted celibacy and observe the Apostolic Tradition. The best of men in latter days will be those who are light of back, i.e. who have neither wife nor child. It is the unanimous opinion of the shaykhs of this sect that the best and most excellent Sufis are the celibates if their hearts are uncontaminated and if their natures are not inclined to sins and lusts.' This is as far as Hujwiri could possibly go, for a categorical denunciation of the institution of marriage was impossible in Islam.

32. Maqrizi, *Khutat*, I, 293, quoted by A. Schimmel, *op cit.*, p.376.
33. A. Schimmel, 'Some Glimpses of the Religious Life in Egypt during the Later Mamluk Period', *Islamic Studies* (Rawalpindi), vol. IV, No.4 (Dec., 1965), p. 376.
34. Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujm* (ed. W. Popper), V, 623, quoted by A. Schimmel, *op cit.*, p. 376.
35. *ibid.*
36. Abul-Qasim Saad bin 'Ali al-Zanjani al-Hafiz al-Zahid (d. 470/1077). See his notice in Ibn al-Jawzi, *Sifat al-Safwa*, II, 151-2; Yaqut, *Mujam al-Buldan*, II, 949; *al-Dhahabi*, *al-Ibar*, III, 276.
37. Abu Mohammad Hayyaj bin 'Ubayd al-Zahid al-Hittini (d. 472/1079); see his notice in *al-Dhahabi*, *al-Ibar*, III, 278.

- 38 *Mu'jam al-Safar* para 291
- 39 Ibn al-Jawzi, *Tabis Iblis*, p 394

However, the story of Sahl bin 'Ali al-Marwazi, quoted from the *Riyadat al-Nufus* of al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi, and the saying of Abu Nasr al Nasrabadi related on the authority of Sulami, both of which he subsequently mentions, put the correct Sufi attitude in the right perspective □

# Sufism and the Dignity of Man

## Ibn 'Arabi and Rumi

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Masataka Takeshita

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**I**T is a well-known fact that Ibn 'Arabi's works are not easy to read. Especially his most influential work, the *Fusus al-Hikam* abounds in idiosyncrasies; highly technical terms, digressions from the main argument, and enigmatic ambiguities and word-plays. Because of these difficulties, many Sufis have composed commentaries on it since the time of Qunawi, his first disciple, and thanks to these commentaries, we can manage to read this work. However, in *Fusus al-Hikam*, sometimes, we encounter parts in which his thoughts are stated in a clear, direct manner, unlike his usual style. Although such parts are few, they leave indelible impressions upon a reader, like a sudden appearance of the blue sky in the midst of dark grey clouds. The beginning of the chapter of Jonah is one of these rare parts.

IBN 'Arabi begins this chapter with the assertion that man in his totality of spirit, body and soul is created in the image of God. The trichotomy of spirit, body and soul has been known since the time of the ancient Greeks. However, while Platonism emphasized only spirituality at the cost of corporeality, Ibn 'Arabi thought of man as a

totality of spirit, body and soul, higher than both animals (without spirit) and angels (without body). Man occupies such a high position that no one, other than God, has the right to destroy him. Furthermore, he says that compassion and caring for His servants are better than killing them through excessive zeal for God, and mutual killing resulting from it. He tells the following story:

David wanted to construct the Temple, and he did so several times, but whenever he finished it, it fell down. Then, David complained of that to God. God revealed to him, 'My temple shall not be built by the hand of the one who shed blood.' When David said, 'Oh, Lord, wasn't that done for Your sake?' He answered, 'Yes, but they were also My servants.'<sup>1</sup>

THE moral of this story is that human life must be preserved at any cost, even if it is of enemies of God. Then Ibn 'Arabi quotes the verses of the Quran. 'But if the enemy inclines towards peace, do thou also incline towards peace, and trust in God.' (8/61) Unconditional respect for human life not only applies to enemies of faith (infidels) but even to murderers. The spirit of the Shar'ia recommends the acceptance of blood money (*diyat*) and forgiveness, averting the death penalty as far as possible. Also, the Prophet said of a man who was about to revenge the murder of his relative, 'If he kills him, he is then no better than him in respect of injustice.' It is also said in the Quran, 'The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree). But if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God,' (42/40).

IN other words, even if the retaliation for muruer (*qisas*) is not prohibited by the Shar'ia, it is nevertheless an evil action, because even a murderer is created in the image of God, therefore those who forgive him and preserve his life will be given reward due from God. Every existing soul is a manifestation of the Divine Name, *al-Zahir* (the Manifest), and a murderer is not an exception. Therefore, Ibn 'Arabi goes so far as to declare that whosoever forgives a murderer and preserves his life, preserves God.

NEXT, Ibn 'Arabi distinguishes human essence and action. What is blameworthy in man is not his essence but his action, and man's dignity and value lie in his essence. Although ultimately, his actions also belong to God, still some actions are praiseworthy and some blameworthy. Blameworthy actions are only so, because the Shar'ia blames them. Here it is necessary to note that Ibn 'Arabi's position on the problem of evil is similar to that of the Ash'arites, namely, both do not recognise the absolute evil, all evils are relative, and they are, in a sense, part of God's divine scheme unknown to man.

THEN Ibn 'Arabi asserts that there is a Divine Wisdom behind Shar'ia, but this wisdom is only known to God and those whom He especially instructs. In the case of retaliation allowed by the Shar'ia (2/177), there is also a Divine Wisdom behind it, namely, it is the preservation of man as a genus, that is, the preservation of humankind. And, when we know how carefully God tries to preserve human life, we, in turn, must care for its preservation all the more, because everyone has an opportunity to achieve the perfection (*Kamaal*) for which he is created, as long as he lives, and those who take his life, take away from him the possibility of reaching the purpose of his creation.

FINALLY, he says that only those who always remember God can understand the dignity and value of man in the true sense of the word. Unfortunately, his discussion now diverts to subtle philosophical and psychological meditation on the act of recollection of God.

THE above argument of Ibn 'Arabi looks *prima facie* similar to contemporary argument for the abolition of the death penalty. However, while the modern arguments are based on secular humanism, Ibn 'Arabi's argument is centered on God. Human life is dignified and respected only because man is created in the image of God. For Ibn 'Arabi, man is the mirror reflecting God, a chain which connects God and the Universe, and God's Viceregent on earth. This view of man is most clearly expressed in the concept of the Perfect Man. The Perfect Man, who occupies the highest position among all the

creatures, only refers to the essence and real nature of man, because man's actions can be those of the lowest and the most evil of all the creatures. But even when his actions are the lowest, the dignity of his nature as created in the image of God remains unchanged. For any man to return to his true nature, i.e., to become the Perfect Man, is the perfection of his existence, and no one is allowed to destroy this possibility.

THEN what kind of man is actually meant by the expression, the Perfect Man, according to Ibn 'Arabi? He is the man who receives the infinite manifestations of God through infinite transformations of his heart. The Perfect Man is the man who can see the manifestation of God in every existing creature of the universe, that is, he is the man who has the heart of tolerance, which can recognize manifestations of Divine Names even in infidels and criminals. Ibn 'Arabi describes the all-embracing heart in the following beautiful verses.

My heart has become capable of every form  
 It is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for  
 Christian monks,  
 And a temple for idols and the pilgrim's Kaaba  
 And the Tables of the Torah and the Book of  
 the Quran.  
 I follow the religion of Love, whatever way  
 Love's camels take  
 That is my religion and my faith.

JUST as in Ibn 'Arabi the love of humanity is not based on modern secular humanism, his religious tolerance and universalism is not based on modern pseudo-religious syncretism, but it is a universalism which has its centre in God, and is viewed from this centre. Differences among religions exist only in outer forms, but at the centre, differences disappear and only Truth remains. Only those who reach the centre can talk about the love of humanity and universal religion in the true sense of the word.

Of course, Ibn 'Arabi is not the only one who arrived at this love of humanity and universal religion. From the beginning, Sufism was

a religion of love, and Sufis always showed the deepest understanding of other religions. Here, beside Ibn 'Arabi, I would like to present the case of Jalaluddin Rumi.

RUMI had many Christian disciples. One day a Muslim who saw many Christians weeping with joy over the discourse of Rumi, asked him how the infidels could understand his discourse. Rumi answered in the following parable.

Although ways are many, the destination is one. Don't you see many ways to the Kaaba. For some the route is from Anatolia, for some from Syria, for some from Persia, for some from China, and still for others the sea-route from India and Yemen. Therefore, if one looks at only ways, then differences are big and distances among one another are infinite, but if one looks at the destination, all agree unanimously, because everyone's heart is directed toward the Kaaba. All the hearts have a strong love and affection for the Kaaba. There, no contradiction exists, because this attachment to the Kaaba is beyond faith and infidelity. In other words, this attachment has nothing to do with those different ways to the Kaaba. Once they arrive at the Kaaba, those disputes, quarrels, and differences which occurred on the way disappear. It is only on the way that they keep saying to each other, "You are wrong, you are infidels." But when they reach the Kaaba, it becomes evident that their quarrels were only over the way, while their destinations were one and the same.<sup>2</sup>

Such universal spirit, transcending the framework of established religions and a deep understanding of other religions prevail throughout Rumi's works. In this respect, Nicholson rightly pointed out that Rumi was superior to his contemporary Dante.

The Sufis, who promote a better understanding of other religions with the spirit of tolerance and respect, are the true followers of the principles of Islam, which not only recognizes Moses and Jesus as true prophets, but also teaches us that a prophet was sent to every nation, and that the teachings of all prophets are the same.

Those who believe in the Quran and those who follow the Jewish scriptures, and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord (Surah 2 - 62).

Say ye: 'We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to all Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to God.'(Surah 2 - 136)

It is these Quranic teachings which are the basis of universalism and spirit of tolerance in Sufism. The following verses of Rumi are the poetical paraphrase of the above Quranic verse.

If you have in the house ten lamps, though every  
one be different

Though every one be different in form from the  
other.

You cannot distinguish the light of the one from  
the other.

Seek the meaning from the scriptures and say  
'We make no difference between one and an  
other of them.'

RUMI compares differences among religions to those among languages spoken by different peoples. Although languages differ, the reality indicated by them is one. A certain man gave a dirham to four men, a Persian, an Arab, a Turk and a Greek. The Persian said, 'I will spend this money on *angur*.' Hearing this, the Arab said, 'No, I want *inab*, not *angur*, O rascal!' The Turk said, 'This money was mine, I don't want *inab*, I want *uzum*.' The Greek said, 'Stop this talk, I want *stifili*.' Thus, they quarrelled over what they would buy with this money, and finally they started a fistfight. If there would have been a sage who could understand their different languages, he could have stopped their fighting immediately, because he could give all of them what they wanted with this one dirham and satisfy all of them. Since they all said that they wanted grapes, each in his own language!

LANGUAGES are external and their multiplicity leads men to fighting and hatred, but Sufis know that the inner meaning which these languages point to is one and the same. Ibn 'Arabi conveys this truth directly without recourse to a parable like Rumi.

Arabs call to God, 'O Allah'; Persians, 'O Khoda'; Greeks, 'O Theo'; Armenians, 'O Asdvaz'; Turks, 'Oh Tanri'; Franks, 'O Createur'; Ethiopians, 'O Waq'. Thus, the pronounced words are different, but the meaning is one for all the creatures.

What surprises us at first in the above quotation of Ibn 'Arabi is his knowledge of so many languages, but it is no wonder that Rumi and Ibn 'Arabi showed keen interest in differences of languages, for the thirteenth century Near Eastern society in which they lived, was a multiracial society divided into many religions and sects. Also it was a time of religious wars between Crusaders and Muslims, and sectarian wars between Sunnis and Shias. Amid the clamor of religious fanaticism and narrow sectarianism, Sufis like Ibn 'Arabi and Rumi reached the centre, that is, the destination of their travels, and there they found out that the differences of religions and sects existed only on the way, namely, at the level of languages. Thus, they were able to overcome the religious hatred and prejudices of their time, and asserted the dignity and value of man created in the image of God.

THE world we live in now is much more divided in respect of religion, language, and culture than their time, and conflicts and fights among different cultural groups are severer and more frequent. Therefore, Ibn 'Arabi's and Rumi's message of unconditional respect for human life and the transcendent unity of religions is all the more pertinent and necessary today.

### *Notes and References*

1. Afifi ed., Ibn 'Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam*, Cairo, 1946, p. 167.
2. Jalaluddin Rumi, *Kitab Jihz na Fihi*, Teheran, 1952, p. 97.  
Furuzanfar, ed.





# Advent of the Sufis in Bengal

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Abdul Karim

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THE Muslim contact with Bengal may be dated from the 8th century AD. The Arabs first established commercial contact with the Bengal coast, chiefly the port of Chittagong. Muslim rule was established in Bengal in the early 13th century, when, in AD 1204, Mohammad Bakhtiar Khalji, in a sudden dash, defeated the King Lakshman Sen and captured his capital Nadiya. Bakhtiar made Lakhnauti (the old city of Gaur) his seat of government, and subsequently, the Muslim Kingdom of Lakhnauti spread gradually in all directions. Before the century was over, the frontier of this kingdom extended upto Sonargaon in the east, Satgaon in the south and Rangpur in the north, while the Muslim rulers also kept Bihar in their possession.

THE foundation and expansion of the Muslim kingdom was due to the efforts of the ruling class, the Sultans and their generals; and simultaneously, the Muslim religious leaders, the *saadat*, *ulema* and *mashaikh* who also followed the ruling class to the newly conquered territory to continue their peaceful religious and cultural pursuits. This

paper is an attempt to throw light on the advent of the Sufis in Bengal and their religious and cultural pursuits. The discussion is limited to the 13th century, the initial stage of Sufism in Bengal.

MINHAJ-I-SIRAJ, the contemporary historian, while giving an account of the founding of Muslim rule in Bengal, makes two significant statements. First, he says that Bakhtiar Khalji, 'Through his praiseworthy endeavours, and those of his nobles, founded mosques, *madrasahs* and *khanqahs* in those parts (of Bengal).'<sup>1</sup> In the second statement he says, 'In that country (Lakhnauti) many marks of his (Iwaz Khalji's) goodness remained. He founded Jami (*majami*) and other mosques, and conferred salaries and stipends upon good men (*ahl-i-khair*) among the *ulema*, *mashaikh* and *saadat*, and other people who acquired from his *bounty* and *munificence*, much riches.'<sup>2</sup>

THIS is important evidence of the fact that after the establishment of the Muslim kingdom in Bengal, the rulers also built religious institutions. It appears that Mohammad Bakhtiar Khalji, was a good statesman with leadership qualities. During the time he established his kingdom, Bengal was inhabited almost totally by a non-Muslim population. He was the first Muslim to step on the soil of Bengal. Before his time, the Arab traders had contact with Bengal through the Chittagong port, but it is doubtful whether they formed any Muslim settlement worthy of notice.<sup>3</sup>

BAKHTIAR Khalji could foresee that without the support of the Muslim society, his newly founded Muslim kingdom of Bengal, would not survive in the face of the opposition of the hostile non-Muslim population. The evidence of Minhaj shows that the religious institutions were built not only in the capital city but also in the outlying parts.

MUSLIMS needed mosques for saying their prayers, *madrasahs* for educating their children, and the *khanqahs* for the residence, devotional exercises and teachings of Sufis. The establishment of the institutions also shows that there were people to sustain them, the *ulema* to lead the prayer in the mosques and to teach in the *madrasahs*. The establishment of *khanqahs* shows that there were also a number of Sufis for whom they were built.

MINHAJ mentions the building of mosques by Sultan Ghausuddin Iwaz Khalji, but does not mention specifically about the construction of *madrasahs* and *khanqahs*. The historian says that the Sultan granted stipend to the *ulema*, *mashaikh* and *saadat*. These groups of people were designated as *ahl-i-khair* or men of learning. In the Muslim period they were also called *ahl-i-saadat* or *ahl-i-qalam* as against the Muslim ruling class who were called *ahl-i-tegh* or *ahl-i-daulat*. The *ahl-i-qalam* group of Muslims devoted themselves to peaceful pursuits; some of them must have accepted service in the state, others maintained *madrasahs* and *khanqahs* and imparted education or preached religion by instituting lectures and sermons or engaged in devotional exercises. They received grants of land, stipends or other benefits from the Muslim rulers. These grants were of the nature of *inam*, *milk* or *medad-i-meash* or assistance for subsistence. Officers like *Sadr*, *Sadr-us-Sudur* and *Sheikh-ul-Islam* used to look after the Department of grants. The *ulema* and others of the group of the learned people, who maintained mosques, *madrasahs* and *khanqahs*, were the recipients of these grants. So, even if Minhaj does not specifically write about the construction of *madrasahs* and *khanqahs* by Sultan Ghausuddin Iwaz Khalji, it may be presumed that the *ulema*, *saadat* and *mashaikh* who received grants from the Sultan were engaged in running the institutions and mosques, *madrasahs* and *khanqahs*.

THE evidence of Minhaj-i-Siraj is confirmed by the evidence of contemporary inscriptions. These inscriptions are: (i) the Sian inscription of Sultan Ghausuddin Iwaz Khalji and (ii) the Sitalmat inscription of Abul Fath Yuzbak.

THE Sian inscription was discovered a few years back at Bolpur, in the district of Birbhum, West Bengal. It is dated 7th Jamadi II, 618 A.H./29th July, AD 1221 and it was issued during the heir-apparentship of Ali Sher, son of Iwaz Khalji.<sup>4</sup> The first three lines of the text of the epigraph contain *Bismillah* and verses from the Holy Quran and tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) appropriate to the object of the record. The object of the record is stated as follows:

This *khanqah* was (built and ) donated by the sinful *faqir*, the one who hopes (for the mercy of his Nourisher) son of Mohammad at Maraghi, for the *Ahl-i-Suffa* (i.e. the band of Sufis) who all the while abide in the presence of the Exalted Allah and occupy themselves in the remembrance of the Exalted Allah.<sup>5</sup>

FOR various reasons, this inscription is a very important discovery. First, this is the earliest inscription, recording the building of a religious institution *khanqah*, in the whole Indian subcontinent.<sup>6</sup> Incidentally, this is also the earliest Muslim inscription, discovered in Bengal. Second, the epigraph clearly mentions that the *khanqah* was meant for *Ahl-i-Suffa*. *Suffa*, means bench, which is a covered place before the doors of mosques. The phrase *Ahl-i-Suffa* (literally, men of the bench) refers to a number of companions of the Prophet, who accompanied him to Medina on his migration, and who, having neither any means nor resources there, lodged in the *Suffa* of the Prophet's mosque. Hence the term is generally applied to Sufis or ascetics. Third, the epigraph not only records the building of *khanqah*, but also records the endowment made for its maintenance. Fourth, the donor appears to be a Sufi himself, as the epithet, 'the sinful *faqir*' (*faqir al-khali*) shows. His name is lost, but his father's name was Mohammad and he came from Maragha, a city in Azerbaijan. Fifth, the building of a *khanqah* specifically for the Sufis shows that a good number of Sufis came to Bengal in that early period, only sixteen years after the conquest, and this fact confirms the evidence of Minhaj-i-Siraj that Bakhtiar Khalji and Iwaz Khalji built mosques, *madrasahs* and *khanqahs*.

THE Sitalmat inscription was also discovered only a few years back from Sitalmat, Nawgaon, Rajshahi. It was issued by Abul Fath Yuz-bak in Ramadan, 65 AD (October, November AD 1254.), during the reign of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah, the Sultan of Delhi.<sup>7</sup>

THE object of the construction of the building is as follows:<sup>8</sup>

The construction of this sacred building for the (use of) pious and the devout, lovers of the Quran....upright,

truthful men and recitors of (Allah's name) day and night....of the purified .....

THE name of the donor and his bequest is as follows:

..... of his own free will .... Ahmed bin Masud .... by way of a covenant with the good men among Allah's people left a bequest from him and from his parents; and is conditional on supervision and inspection, because his life is for a measured period, to him who accepts (this condition), and whosoever changes the condition after he had heard it then its sin will be on those who change it, and verily, Allah is all-hearing and all-knowing.<sup>9</sup>

THESE admonitions, engraved on stone have been fixed on the door.

Curse be on him who alters the foundation of this structure and damages (it).<sup>10</sup>

THE epigraph records the construction of a sacred building, so it could be a mosque, a *madrasah*, a *khanqah* or a shrine. But as the building was meant, 'for the use of the pious, the devout, the lovers of the Quran, upright, truthful and reciters of Allah's name day and night', we believe the building to be a *khanqah*. We have seen in the Sian inscription, discussed above, that a *khanqah* was built about thirty-four years before. In fact the wording of this inscription shows that the people for whom the building was meant, were the Sufis or *Ahl-i-Suffa* as found in the Sian inscription, though the words *Ahl-i-Suffa* are not found in this epigraph.

THE editor of the inscription, Dr Habibullah says, 'The structure mentioned in the inscription was evidently some kind of *Chillakhana* or special house of meditation meant for those who are given to constant religious exercises in total retirement from worldly distractions. Such buildings were not strictly necessary for a Muslim community as the mosque is, and could be meaningful only in places with a settled Muslim population, where men of such religious ardour could be found, or are frequented by recluses because of a divine or a saint who would inspire such religious devotions.'<sup>11</sup> This religious building was erected only within two generations of Muslim political expansion. This epigraph,

therefore, not only lends support to the evidence of *Minhaj-i-Siraj*, but read with the Sian inscription (discussed above), gives a strong proof that the Sufis came to Bengal in good numbers soon after its political conquest.

THE names of the Sufis who came in this early period are not known, their names are not mentioned either in the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* or in the two inscriptions. Some Sufis are believed to have come to Bengal before the Muslim conquest. They are immortalised in the hearts of men through traditions. It is difficult to determine how and when they came to Bengal, but their shrines have become places of pilgrimage for the local people and are continuing even to this day. Prominent among the saints of this category are Baba Adam Shahid of Rampal, Dhaka; Shah Sultan Runi of Madanpur, Netrokona (erstwhile Mymensingh district); Shah Sultan Mahisawar of Mahasthan, Bogra; Makhdum Shah Daulah Shahid of Shahzadpur (erstwhile Pabna district); and Makhdum Shah Mahmud Ghaznavi alias Rahim Pir of Mangalkot, Burdwan. No authentic evidence about them is available to determine their dates and in all probability they came to Bengal after the establishment of the Muslim rule. There is a shrine in Chittagong, attributed to Bayazid Bastami but there is no evidence that he ever visited Bengal.<sup>12</sup>

THOUGH the dates of the above Sufis are not known, there is evidence that two Sufis of great repute came to Bengal in the 13th century. They were Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi and Sheikh Sharafuddin Abu Tawwamab.

### **Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi**

SHEIKH Jalal was a disciple, first of Sheikh Abu Said Tabrizi and then after his death, of Sheikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi. After the death of his teacher, Sheikh Jalal Tabrizi came to Delhi, and on his arrival there, Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish, accompanied by Sheikh ul Islam Najmuddin Sughra, came out to receive him. The Sultan ordered that

arrangement be made for his stay near the palace. At this, the Sheikh ul Islam grew jealous and brought a charge against Sheikh Jalal. The latter was friendly with Sheikh Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki and Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya. The charge brought against him by the Sheikh ul Islam proved to be false, but Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi left Delhi for Bengal.<sup>13</sup>

THE spiritual exploits of the saint in Bengal has been the subject-matter of *Shek Subhodaya*, a Sanskrit work attributed to Halayudh Mishra, a courtier of Lakshman Sen, the Sen King of Bengal, defeated by Bakhtiar Khalji. According to this book, the saint came to Bengal before Bakhtiar Khalji's conquest, and foretold the impending Turkish attack and Lakshman Sen's defeat. It further says that Sheikh Jalal Tabrizi was born at Etawah (in modern Uttar Pradesh, India), his father's name was Kafur, he received education with the help of a merchant named Ramzan Khan and left home due to the conspiracy of that merchant. He came to Bengal, built a *khanqah*, where he used to feed the poor, destitutes and wayfarers. Miracles were also attributed to him. The King Lakshman Sen being impressed by his miracles built a *dargah* and a mosque in his honour and made liberal grants of land for their maintenance.<sup>14</sup>

THE book is in corrupt Sanskrit. Scholars believe that the book is a later piece, wrongly attributed to a courtier of Lakshman Sen. The book is not only spurious, but 'Prepared to establish a right to the Rais Hazari Estates (the estate attached to Sheikh Jalal Tabrizi's shrine at Pandua) during the preparation of Todar Mal's rent-roll in Akbar's time.'<sup>15</sup> Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi was not born at Etawah, he was born a Tabriz in Persia. Beside the hagiological literature calling him at Tabrizi, in all available inscriptions too he is called Tabrizi, and in one inscription, he is 'Jalaluddin Shah Tabriz Muallad,' (Jalaluddin Shah was born at Tabriz).<sup>16</sup> Second, he could not have come to Bengal before Bakhtiar Khalji's conquest. According to all biographical works on the Sufis, he came to Delhi when Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish was on the throne. So he could not have come to Delhi before 1210. Lakshman Sen died in 1206, i.e. four years before the accession of Iltutmish. The book *Shek Subhodaya* had nothing to do with Halayudh Mishra, a court-poet of Lakshman Sen.

AT Pandua, Malda, there is a set of buildings which go by the name of Bari Dargah or the shrine of Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi. The name Bari Dargah is given to it to distinguish it from the Chhoti Dargah or the shrine of Sheikh Nur Qutb Alam. The buildings at the Bari Dargah are – one Jami mosque, two *chillakhanas* (houses of meditation), one *tanur Khana* (kitchen), one *bhandarkhana* (store-house), Haji Ibrahim's tomb, and Salami Darwaza (entrance gate). The original shrine was built by Sultan Alauddin Ali Shah (1340-42), according to Ghulam Husain, the author of the *Riyaz-us-Salahu*.<sup>17</sup> The date of the original construction of the mosque is not known, but it was repaired by Shah Nimatullah in AD 1664.<sup>18</sup> The dates of construction of other buildings are also not known; there are some inscriptions attached to these buildings, but all these are dated from the 17th century. The endowment to the shrine is known as Bais Hazari as initially the annual income of the endowment was twenty-two thousand tankas.<sup>19</sup>

THERE is another *chillakhana* of the saint at Deotala, fifteen miles north of Pandua, which place came to be known as Tabrizabad after the name of the saint. Four inscriptions referring to Tabrizabad or Tabrizabad *urf* Deotala have so far been discovered and they range in date from AD 1464 to 1571.<sup>20</sup> It appears that Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi passed a part of his life in meditation in the *chillakhana* of Deotala. Mir Sayyed Ashraf Jahangir Simnani, a fifteenth century saint, in a letter, says that some saints of the Jaliliya order, i.e. the disciples of Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi are buried at Deotala.<sup>21</sup>

THE hagiological literature speaks of Sheikh Jalal's coming to Bengal but does not refer to his leaving the place. This suggests that the saint is buried somewhere in Bengal, either at Pandua or at Deotala, the two places with which he is found closely associated. According to the *Ain-i-Akbari*,<sup>22</sup> the saint, died at Deo Mahal, which modern scholars like Blochmenu and Beveridge identify with the Maldives islands.<sup>23</sup> In making this identification, the scholars have been led by similarity of names. Ibn Batuta referred to the Maldives Islands as Divat-ul-Mahal, which becomes Deo Mahal in the Persian form. But, Sheikh Jalaluddin

Tabrizi is not known to be lying buried at the Maldivian Islands, nor any tradition relating to the saint is available there. It seems very probable that Deo Mahal of the *Anu* should be identified with some place in Bengal. Deotala, with which Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi was closely associated, has got the same meaning as Deo Mahal, *tala* replacing the *mahal*. Besides, in the *Ain-i-Akhari*, there are references to some other revenue divisions in Bengal prefixing the word Deo, Deoya, Deoyapur, Deopara and Deokot. Therefore, it seems very probable that Deo Mahal of the *Ain* is the same as Deotala in Bengal and that the saint is lying buried there.<sup>24</sup>

THE date of the death of Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi is also a subject of controversy. According to Sheikh Abdul Huq Dehlavi, the saint died in 623 A.H. or AD 1226, while according to the *Khazinat-ul-Asfiya*, he died in 642 A.H. or AD 1244. Both these dates are probable, considering that the saint was not only a contemporary of but also friendly with Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki (died in AD 1235) and Bahauddin Zakariya (died in AD 1262).

### **Sheikh Sharafuddin Abu Tawwamah**

THE *Manaqib-ul-Asfiya*<sup>25</sup> of Shah Shuaib gives an account of Sheikh Sharafuddin Abu Tawwamah in Bengal. The saint was born in Bukhara, received his education in Khurasan, and came to Delhi about AD 1260. He was a Hanafi Jurist and a traditionalist of great reputation and was well-versed in chemistry, natural sciences and magic. Soon he gathered a large number of adherents and devotees in Delhi. The Sultan of Delhi became nervous at his growing popularity and with a view to getting rid of him urged him to go to Sonargaon. At Sonargaon, Sheikh Sharafuddin Abu Tawwamah devoted himself to cultural pursuits. He built a *madrasah* for teaching students Islamic exoteric sciences and a *khanqah* for teaching esoteric sciences to his disciples. Here, he was surrounded by a large number of students and disciples, the chief of whom was Sheikh Sharafuddin Yahya Maneri. The latter studied Urdu from his

teacher as well as *Tafsir*, *Hadith*, *Fiqh* and other branches of Islamic learning.

THE *madrasah* was a large residential institution, where teachers and students lived on the premises. The *kanturi* or dinner-table was open to all students, disciples, teachers, guests and visitors. As the number of those attending the *kanturi* was great, it took a long time to finish the meal. Sheikh Sharafuddin Yahya Maneri thought that it was a mere waste of time to attend the *kanturi*, and so he discontinued attending it even at the risk of losing his usual meal. When Abu Tawwamah came to know the reason for his absence from the dinner-table, he arranged to have his meal served separately. This anecdote from the life of Sheikh Sharafuddin Yahya Maneri gives an idea of the size of the *madrasah*.<sup>26</sup>

SHEIKH Sharafuddin Abu Tawwamah wrote a book on Tasawwuf called *Maqamat*. The book gained popularity among the learned people. Another book named *Nam-i-Haq*, by a disciple of the Sheikh was written in 693 A.H. (AD 1293). This is a book on *fiqh*, in Persian verse, dealing with essential rules of *wazu* (ablution), *ghusl* (purificatory bath), *tayammum* (purification by dust or sand where water is not available), *namaz* (prayer) and *roza* (fasting). It is a small book containing 180 verses, divided into 13 chapters, including three chapters on *Hamd*, *Naat* and the author's introduction. There are also two verses on *Khatimah* or conclusion. Through this book Sheikh Sharafuddin Abu Tawwamah's fame spread all over the world.<sup>27</sup>

BESIDE Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi and Sheikh Sharafuddin Abu Tawwamah, names of two other religious persons are known. They were Maulana Taqiuddin Arabi and Qazi Ruknuddin Samarqandi. Maulana Taqiuddin maintained a *madrasah* at Mahisum.<sup>28</sup> Chief among his pupils was Sheikh Yahya Maneri (father of Sharafuddin Yahya Maneri).<sup>29</sup> Maulana Taqiuddin was an Arab, as his epithet *Arabi* suggests.

QAZI Ruknuddin Samarqandi was the Qazi of Lakhnauti under Sultan Alauddin Ali Mardan Khalji (AD 1210-13). Qazi Ruknuddin

converted to Islam a yogi named Bhojar Brahman. The yogi presented a Sanskrit book entitled *Amritkund* to the Qazi and the latter translated it into Arabic and Persian.<sup>30</sup> Qazi Ruknuddin Samarqandi is identified with Qazi Ruknuddin Abu Hamid Mohammad bin Mohammad al-Amidi of Samarqand who was a famous Hanafi jurist and a Sufi. He was a distinguished Muslim, theologian and was the author of *Kitab-ul-Irshad*. He died at Bokhara on the 9th Jamadi II, 615 A.H. AD 1218.<sup>31</sup>

FROM the above discussion, it is clear that the Sufis started coming to Bengal from the beginning of the Muslim rule. They came in fairly good numbers, so that *khanqahs* were built to facilitate their devotional exercises. Before the end of the first one hundred years of Muslim conquest of Bengal, Sufis spread upto Sonargaon in the east and Nawgaon and Dinajpu in the north. Later, Sufis spread further; in the 14th century, came Shah Jahal with his 360 followers to Sylhet, and Shah Badr with his followers came to Chittagong. During the same period came Sheikh Akhi Siraj, a disciple of Sheikh Nizammuddin Auliya to Gaur. He left a line of disciples of the Chishtiya order at Pandua. The place became famous for Sheikh Ala ul Haq and his more illustrious son Sheikh Nur Qutb Alam. Mir Sayyid Ashraf Jahangir Simnani, a disciple of Sheikh Ala ul-Haq, writes that there was no town and no village in Bengal where holy saints did not come and settle.<sup>32</sup> Even if one is hesitant to accept the above statement, the names of Sufis and the account of their activities that have come down to us, either through tradition or through literary and epigraphic evidence, establish the fact that their number was not small. Even today, the Sufis play a very important part in the Muslim society of Bangladesh.

### **Notes and References**

1. Minha-j-Siraj, *Tabqat-i-Nawwi*, p. 64, Lahore edition.
2. ibid. p. 73.

- 3 A Karim, *Social History of the Muslims in Bengal*, 2nd ed Chittagong, 1985 (hereafter referred to as *Social History*), pp 26-35
- 4 *Epigraphic India Arabic Persian Supplement*, hereafter referred to as *EIASP*, 1975, pp 6-12
- 5 *ibid* p 8
- 6 Z A Desai writes, 'As a matter of fact, this is perhaps the only record specifically referring to a *khanqah* that has been found in Bengal. We have got about two dozen records of *khanqahs* from other parts of the country, but none of them of so early a date.'
- 7 *Bangladesh Lalit-Kala*, Vol I No 2, July, 1975, pp 89-94
- 8 *ibid*
- 9 Quran, 2, 181
- 10 *Bangladesh Lalit-Kala*, Vol I, No 2, July, 1975, p 89
- 11 *Social History*, pp 118-128
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- 13 *Akhbar-ul-Akhbar fi Asrar-ul Abrar*, pp 44-45
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- 15 R C Majumdar, ed *History of Bengal* Dhaka University, 1943, Vol I p 225
- 16 Abid Ali Khan & H E Shapleton, *Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua* (hereafter referred to as *Memoirs*), p 102
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- 20 *ibid* pp 169-71
- 21 *Bengal Past and Present* Vol LXVII, No 130, 1948, pp 482-83
- 22 Jarrett & Sarkar, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol III, p 406
- 23 *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 1873, p 560; 1895, pp 250 ff
- 24 For a learned discussion on the subject, see *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol VIII, Part III, July 1960, pp 202-226
- 25 Printed at the end of *Maktubat-i-Saudi* of Sheikh Sharafuddin Yahya Maneri
- 26 *Maktubat-e-Saudi*, p 340
- 27 There are two editions of *Nam-i-Haq*, one published from Kanpur in 1332 A H and another from Bombay in AD 1985
- 28 Mahisun-or Mahi Santosh was formerly in Dinajpur district, but is now included in

- the Rajshahi district J N Sarkar, ed *History of Bengal*, Vol II Dhaka University, 1948, p 37
- 29 *Maktabat e Saudi*, p 339
- 30 *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* Vol I, Part I, 1953, pp 46 ff The Arabic version of the book *Amritkunda* (House of Nectar) entitled *Hauz ul Havat* has been published by Yusuf Husain in *Journal Asiatique* Tom CC XIII, 1928, October-December, pp 306-344 The Persian Version *Bahū ul Havat* has also been published at the Faizul Karim Press Bombay 1310, A H
- 31 *ibid* pp 50-51
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# The Polar Function of the Tasawwuf

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Gian Giuseppe Filippi

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**A**MONG the Sufic doctrines regarding the domain of the *Batin-ul-batin* (the interior of interior) one of the most mysterious is the figure of the Pole, the *Quth*. In literature of the Tasawwuf, many points of view are expressed about the *Quth*, sometimes considered as a principle, sometimes as a person. In any case, everywhere in Dar-ul-Islam, from the *maghrib* upto the Philippines, always in Islamic History, from Jafar upto now, the Pole has been described as the apex of the Sufic hierarchy. It is very interesting to dwell on the symbolism employed by the Sufis in the elaboration of this doctrine.

FIRST of all, I would like to examine the same term *Quth*, Pole. The term *Quth* is not mentioned in the Holy Quran. Tabari interpreting the 17th ayat of the *Sura-e-Rahman* (LV) about the two Easts and two Wests, focussed the Quranic idea of the Pole.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the two Easts would be the two extreme points of the horizon from where the sun rises in the days of both the solstices, and likewise, the two Wests would be where it sets on the same days. This movement of the sun

through the spheres emphasizes the fixity of the Pole. The Islamic astronomers, like Abul Wafa, Battani, Farqhani, Az-Zarqal, considered the Pole as the steady point in the sky where the earthly axle hinges. By this perspective, the cosmos wheels around its fixed axis through the four cardinal points. The same cosmological structure is the basis for the Sufic doctrine of *Qutb*, but in a spiritual interpretation of the astronomical data. It is very interesting that the famous vision which Mohiuddin Ibn-i-Arabi had related in *Futuhat-al-Makkiyyah*. Shaikh Akbar saw in the sky – the vertical position upon the Kaaba, a vertex *Rukn*, and on the top, a wonderful bird.<sup>2</sup> The vertical axle descended from the *Rukn* to the Kaaba, and from the same point in the sky four lines started, reaching the four *Arkan* of the compass. We know, through other sources, that at the top of this cosmic pyramid is the Throne of God, *al-Arsh*, and the spirit of the Holy prophet Mohammad, *ar-Ruh al-Mohammadiyyah*, stays in the centre of the Throne.<sup>3</sup> In this way this supreme concept of *Qutb* is transmitter of the Divine knowledge, and at the same time, transmitter of Divine Activity, *al-Haqq ul-Mukhluqubihi*.<sup>4</sup> The Kaaba is the projection of *al-Arsh* on the Earth. In the case of the projection of the *Qutb* on the Earth, we found in the Sufic texts two different interpretations; when *Qutb* means a spiritual principle, its projection is the Black Stone set in Kaaba. On the contrary, when the *Qutb* is personified, his projection on the Earth will be the *Mutassawwif* playing the function of 'Qutb of the age', *Qutb-az-Zaman*.

BOTH the cases are joined in a famous anecdote concerning Abu Madyan Shu'aib Ibn al Husain al-Maghribi, considered the Pole of his age, and very well told by Affifi.<sup>5</sup> Abu Madyan (d.594/1197), was once asked whether people touching him and kissing him (for blessing) had any effect on him? He answered, 'Does the Black Stone feel the effect of people touching it and kissing it? I am the Black Stone.' In this way the projection of the vertex of the cosmic pyramid is the centre of the Earth, the fifth cardinal point where two lines, joining East to West and North to South, intersect. The Kaaba is the motionless point, whereas the 'Qutb of the age' is the mobile one. This idea

is so expressed by Abu Yazid al-Bistami, 'I did the *tawaaf* around the Kaaba several times, but when I arrived before Allah, the Kaaba came and did the *tawaaf* around me.'<sup>6</sup> Therefore, true fixity is the quality of the conscious centre of the Earth, rather than of the geographic symbol of the center.

RETURNING to the cosmic view of the supreme *Qutb*, which from now we shall call *Qutb al-Ghaus*, to distinguish him by his 'projections', we must add some important details. The *Qutb*, in the centre, *al-Markaz*, of *al-Arsh*, is represented in the *falak-al-manazil* (the sky of the fixed star), by the Pole Star.<sup>7</sup> The seven stars of the Bear are the nearest companions of the Pole Star, and for that the number seven is always attributed to it. In another perspective, Shah Waliullah Dehalwi<sup>8</sup> connects the Pole with the number seven; the *Qutb* presiding over the Sublime Assembly, *al-Mala al-Ala*, of the fixed stars belongs to the sphere containing the seven planetary spheres. In the *Satu'at* Shah Waliullah maintains; 'When the Administrator of the heavens and the earth manifested His grace in the garment of words and letters in the Divine Books, that grace made a natural flow. All the past evils became represented before His eye, and then some other way was fixed for the guidance of people. That is the interpretation of the Throne, the owner of the Throne, and of the sitting upon the Throne. This sitting upon, however, took place after the creation of the seven heavens.' The reason being, that this middle point which is one in Shaikh Akbar, became fixed in it, after its entire completion, just as, the center becomes fixed after the completion of the spherical objects.' God says, 'He created seven heavens and then sat upon the Throne.'<sup>9</sup>

MOLIIDDIN, in another passage of the *Futuhat*, gives a symbolic description of the intuition of the Absolute unity and transcendence of God. It has the form of a 'house' supported by four pillars, *awtad*. Upon its doorless walls, a roof spread. The *Qutb* is like a fifth column adjoining the outside walls. The Sufis touch and kiss this column as the pilgrims in Makka kiss with the Black Stone. This column crosses all the *maqamat* of the Sufis and all the skies.<sup>10</sup> In this

way the *Quth* appears as the *axis mundi* itself. There is a continuity between the *Quth al-Ghaus* and the earthly *Quth*. This axle is the channel of communication from up and down for the descents, *tanazzulat*, of the Divine Will, *al-Qadr*, that is the way of *jazb*. In the opposite direction there is the communication of ascent, the *miraj*, or the *suluk*, the Sufic path towards God.

AHMAD Ibn Ajiba says in his *Miraj*, ‘The *tanazzul*, is the opposite process of *taraqqi* or *suluk*, the ascent towards the Divine Reality. The man attracted, the *majzub*, is in a *haal* to whom God reveals for an instant the perfection of His Essence. This man is led to the vision of the Names and Attributes of God, and then to the forms, *aasaar*.<sup>11</sup> During the night of *al-Qadr*, the passivity of the Holy Prophet is the model for the *majzub*, whereas, during the night of the *Miraj*, he is the model of the *salik*. The seven skies crossed by Mohammad coincide with the seven subtle centres, *lataif*, crossed by the Sufi during the route of the *suluk*. About this there is an important *maqtuba* of Hazrat Ahmed Sirhindi, addressed to Khwaja Mirza Jamaluddin Hussain, ‘My son, pay attention. When the traveller towards God is plunged in the *Zikr*, and purifies his own soul with effort and abstinence, his worst behaviour changes to a better one, and he renounces, repents and moves away from worldly attractions. In the *alam-al-misaal*, he finds himself free from human impurities and mean behaviour. Then you know that he has covered the journey from the cardinal points. Many wise *Mashaikh* maintain that the journey from the cardinal points is achieved when the traveller towards Allah, covers the complete purifying trip through the seven *lataif*, *Qalb Ruh*, *Sirr*, *Khafi*, *Akhfa*, *Nafs*, *Qalib*, and admires their splendid, different colours in the *alam-al-misaal*.<sup>12</sup> The letters of Hazrat Mujaddid contain many important details, first of all there is the concept of the journey from the cardinal points towards a point that we recognize to be the Center. During this journey the *salik* purifies his own behaviour. The second side of the journey is towards God and it consists of the purification of the seven *lataif*. We recognize once more the pyramidal structure of the Cosmos.

WE have established a strict link between the subtle centers of man and the planetary spheres. For the great *Pirs* of the Naqshbandiya Tariqa, the *lataif* communicate the sciences of different Prophets. We must go back to another *risala* of the Shaikh Akbar. In *Fusus al-Hikam*, Mohammad, as *ar ruh al-Mohammadiya* is described as the same principle of the Prophecy. All the other Prophets, including the historical personality of Mohammad, are depending on him for their mission. The *Quth* in this perspective, first creature of God, *awwal Khalqillah*, is really also the last one, *al-Akhir* as *Khatm al-Risalah*, seal of the Prophecy. In the *tanazzul* from the center of the sky to the center of the human world throughout the Polar axle, *ar-Ruh al-Mohammadiya* crosses the centres of the seven planetary spheres. Here the principle of the Prophecy sets seven secondary *Aqtah*, represented by seven Prophets. In the introduction to the *Futuhat*, Shaikh Akbar lists them in this order: Saturn, Ibrahim, Jupiter, Musa, Mars, Arun, Sun, Idris, Venus, Yusuf, Mercury, Isa, Moon, Adam. For this reason Prophet Mohammad, in his trip towards God, before reaching the Lotus of the limit, *sidratul-muntaqi*, crossing the planetary spheres, can meet and talk with his predecessors. The Sufic tradition does not pass over a sevenfold sky only, but over seven earths too. Perhaps it is more correct to call them 'climes'. *tabaqat* or *iklim*. The seven climes of the Earth follow each other, presenting successively different conditions for the human existence. Each *tabaqa* has its own *Badal*, which is the substitute of the *Quth* of his corresponding planetary sphere. 'The substitutes (*Abdal*) are seven, they never increase and never decrease. Through them God preserves the seven climes. Each substitute possesses the clime within which he is the Governor and Friend.... They know the affairs and mysteries that God has placed in the seven planets....'<sup>13</sup>

BEING members of this class of *aqtah*, human beings cannot get a length of life covering the whole duration of their *tabaya*. Therefore, each climate is distinguished by a series of *Aqtah* that we called before *az-zaman*, of their age.

AFTER Prophet Mohammad, a long series list of Sufis played the

function of *Quth* of the age, being the heads of the hierarchy of the *Tasawwuf*. Most of them remained unknown to the exterior.

THE mysterious doctrine of the *Quth* is the structural spinal column of Sufism. Starting with the *Quth al-Ghaus* from the Throne, through the planetary *Aqtab*, the *al-Mursalin*, the Prophets of our *tahaqa*, the Holy Prophet Mohammad, and finishing with the *Quth* of the present day; in our exposition we have run over the descent of the *tanazzulat* and their historical development. Many Sufis wrote books describing the *maqamat*, from the simple *murid* upto the level of the *Quth*. Almost all the Sufic readers agree that the spiritual way lies in two sectors. The first one, under the direction of the *Shaikh at-Tariqa*, *Pir*, *Murabbul Murshidun*, is the introduction to the *suluk*. The second section is the ascent, through the skies towards God, upto the world of the *Quth al-Ghaus*.

THE functions of the *Quth* consist in the transmission of Divine Knowledge and Divine Activity, as we have stated from the *Futuhat*. Through the chain of the Sufic Hierarchy, this function manifests itself in the Doctrine and the Method that the *Pir* gives to the disciple. The efficacy of the transmission of the *Bayat* or *Wazifa*, the initiation, is guaranteed by the real link between the *Quth* and the *Shaikh at-Tariqa*. I remember that an old *Pir* of Delhi, few years ago, explained to me this relationship, using the following example: the true spiritual guide receives the power of the *baraqat* from the *Quth* just as the lamp gets its light from electricity. In this way, the lamp is able to illuminate the ambience. But if the *Pir* cuts off his spiritual contact with the *Quth*, he is not able to give the *Bayat*, as a lamp with its wire being cut. Therefore, the transmission of the *Bayat* from *Shaikh* to *Shaikh* of the *Silsilah* is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition. The spiritual link with the *ar-Ruh-al-Mohammadiya*, through the axle of the world, allows the access to the *suluk* towards God.

THERE is another important function of the *Quth*, which is often neglected. Ibn Ajiba said: 'The Pole is he who preserves the order of the Creation and the Creator, *al-kawn wa al-Mukawwin*. He is unique.'

The same term is used to identify those who got the rule of a *maqam*. For this reason there can be, at the same time, a multiplicity of *Aqtab*.<sup>14</sup> The Supreme Pole, the *Aqtab* and the *Abdal* rule the *Khalq* or its sectors in the name of God, the one and only King of the world, 'He sent the seven *Abdal* as rulers in the seven climes, each *Badal* in every single clime', in the words of Shaikh Akbar.<sup>15</sup> 'The hierarchy of the *Batin ul batin* guides the destinies of the world, according to the Divine Will with mysterious means which never interfere with human activities.' Sha'rani, in his *Lawaqih al Anwar fi Tabaqat al Akhyar* describes this essential activity of the hierarchy led by the *Qutb* in this way: 'When some man, considered a saint, comes from the desert, the people bestow great honour and regard upon him. They do not know how many *Abdal* and saints stay among men, supporting the weights of the Humanity, and protecting it from the evil.'<sup>16</sup>

ACCORDING to the authority of God's word to the Prophet, 'If they (the human beings) deviate, you must only give the edifying transmission.'<sup>17</sup> This function of the *Qutb* and of his representatives does not carry into an activism or an activity, but in a function of presence. 'The meaning of *sabr*, Ibn Ajiba states, is to offer the heart to the divine influences....; the *sabr* of the people of the *Batin ul-batin* is the concentration of *ar-Ruh* and *al-Sur* in the presence, *al-Hazra*....; or it is the constant contemplation and the affirmation of the *al-Hazra*.'<sup>18</sup> For this reason, people gave to the few known representatives of the Pole, the title of *Hazrat*. These Sufis, by virtue of their existence in the world, manifest the will of God. Therefore, the real activity of the Sufic hierarchy never never can be political. The activism in the policy of some *Tariqas* is a certain symptom of degeneration and of the cut of that aforesaid wire.

THE function of presence consists of reduction of multiplicity in the direction of the unity, of the composition of the divisions, of the getting over of the dualities, remembering always '*Qul hu Allahu Ahad*'.<sup>19</sup> The *Tawhid* is no more a theory, but a goal. The horizon is the place where one finds the distinctions and the oppositions, whereas,

the center is the place of the dissolution of any antimonies. This has been the meaning of the journey from the cardinal points' of Hazrat Mujaddid. The evidence of this is that you can see with half an eye. For instance in *Tasawwuf* the difference between Sunnis and Shias does not matter. Sometimes in the exterior ambience some non Sufic movements were born but inspired from and by Sufism.

One of the most interesting examples has been the Khilafat Movement of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and of the Ali Brothers which also got the solidarity of the Hindus.<sup>20</sup> The purpose of the movement was to safeguard the unity of the *Ummah* preserving the Khalifa as warrant for the *Shariah* keeper of the Kaaba and other holy places.

In recent research about the Hindu doctrine of *Cakravartin* we have analysed the doctrine of the Universal kingship in the *Hindu Dharma*.<sup>21</sup> It is easy to recognize many similar elements. *Dhruva* and the seven *Rishis*, the seven *Sangas* and their regents, the seven *Dvipas*, *Adi Manu* and the seven past *Manus*, the *Avatars* and the *Paramparas* through the human history upto the living *Gurus*, the *Cakravartin* and the defence of the universal order *Dharma*, the *Jagatimadhva* and so on. This means that Hinduism is the only other religion which gets a complete doctrine of the Polar function.

THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE between Indian Sufism and the *Tasawwuf* of other countries. But, there is a geographical difference. India is anything but an ordinary country. It is not by chance that the Islamic tradition maintains that Hazrat Adam got down in India and here he settled.<sup>22</sup> In fact, after the first dramatic contact between the Islamic and Hindu civilizations, a splendid period of ecumenism was founded under the patronage of Sufis and *Bhakti Yogi*.<sup>23</sup> From Ramananda through Kabir, Jayesı, Dadu, Mazhar Jan-i-Janan, Sundar Das, Shah Waliullah, upto Sri Ramakrishna, in India there appeared magnificent examples of Universal Spirits endowed with an holistic ideal. The co-operation between the Muslims and Hindus has been able to find a

unitarian view in the *Batin ul-batin* We have evidence that only at this level the cooperation was successful considering the failure of the profane attempts, as the syncretisms of Akbar and Dara Shikoh

The modern world has reopened many old wounds—increasing the distances between the two greatest communities of India. The moderation and wisdom of the politicians can repair the situation, but only a spiritual action of Presence would be able to re-create the true peace. And the Polar Function can always begin again now in India, here in Delhi, in the shade of the Qutb Minar, on the remains of the Quwwat ul-Islam

### **Notes and References**

- 1 Ibn Janah al Tabari *Jami ul Bayan an ta wili al Quran* (Tafsir) Misr al Kahira 1373 ch XXVII p 127
- 2 See Abdul Karim al Jili *Al Insan ul Kamil* Misr al Kahira 1316 Vol I pp 13-15
- 3 Ibn ul Arabi *Futuhat al Makkiyah* 4 Vols Misr al Kahira 1293 III p 183
- 4 *Fut* I p 196 II p 79
- 5 A F Altili *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhiuddin Ibn ul Arabi* Lahore (Pak ) 1964 p 76
- 6 Farid ad Din al Attar *Iadhkar al Awliya* It ed *Parole di Sufi* Torino 1964, p 234
- 7 The assertion of Burckhardt that the Qutb is represented by the Sun is nonsense  
T Burckhardt *Cle de l' Astrologie Musulmane* Milan 1982
- 8 Shah Waliullah Dehlawi *Sataat* Hyderabad (Pak ) 1969 s n 42 43
- 9 *Quran* Surat al Furqan XXV aya 59
- 10 *Fut* II p 767
- 11 J L Michon *Le Soufi marocain Ahmad ibn Ajiba et son Muraj* Paris 1973
- 12 Sh Ahmed Sirihindi, *Maqubat* IV Vols Istanbul vd
- 13 *Fut* II 79
- 14 *Muraj* p 143

15. *Fut.*, I, 1.
16. Sha'ram, *Vite e detti de Santi Musulmani*, Torino 1968, p. 241.
17. Surat an, Nahl, *Quran*, XVI, aya 82.
18. *Miraj* 6.
19. Surat al-Ikhlas, *Quran*, aya CXII.
20. Humayun Kabir, ed *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, New Delhi 1959
21. G.G. Filippi, 'Cakravartin: Mythic and Historical Symbols', in *Annali di Ca Foscari*, n. 20 1991.
22. See. Al-Kissay *Qisas al-Anbiya*. Ath-Thalabi, *Araiy ul Majalis*, Tabari, *Jami ul-Bayan*
23. G.G. Filippi, 'Gli attributi divini secondo la Bhakti Hindu e l'Islam', in *Verifiche*, Trento 1974

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# Sufism and Turkish Literature

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THE year 1991, marking the centenary of a prominent personality of modern Indian history, a writer, and political figure, a great friend of Turkey, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, is also a jubilee year for Turks. The Turkish nation, recalls the 750th anniversary of the birth of the mystic poet Yunus Emre, who left a permanent trace on the thinking and feeling of the people of Anatolia.

YUNUS Emre lived and worked in a complex period. He was born in circa 1241, two years before the battle near Kose Dag, which marked the end of the sovereignty of the Saljuq dynasty in Asia Minor. Before the end of his life, Yunus Emre saw the rise of the power of Osman I, the founder of a new Turkish dynasty.

THE Mongol invasion, which started in autumn 1219, provoked a mass migration of the affected population on the one hand, and a movement of the Turkic nomad tribes, on the other. Asia Minor experienced a mighty migration wave, the second one after the victory of the Saljuqs near Manzikert in 1071, which contributed to greater heterogeneity in this region.

It was precisely Sufism which, thanks to its symbiosis with the entire range of religious ideas and philosophical views, tolerance and stress on ethics, acted as a unifying force among the heterogeneous races of Anatolia. Members of mystic brotherhoods, by their missionary and charitable activity—won over to Islam, Christian settlers as well as pagan nomads. The syncretic nature of religious practice provided scope both for the cult of saints and for magic.

SUFISM, contrary to Christian mysticism, gradually acquired a mass character and attained a high standard of development at a time when it struck firm roots in Asia Minor. Mystic poetry was nourished in its bosom, and, together with music and dance, stimulated ecstatic states. Esoteric verses proved the most adequate means of expressing the state of a mystic in ecstasy. Persian Sufis were primarily responsible for the original style of erotic poetry, the aim of which was to express the delectations and tortures of love of God. It is particularly to them that Sufism is indebted for its system of symbols and metaphors which enabled it to conceal the more daring deviations from orthodox nomads. A visual, imaginative, extrovert perception, proper to Persians, forced them to seek a deeper, inner meaning in Semitic Monotheism.<sup>1</sup>

AN intensive and permanent fountainhead of creative stimuli not only to Persians, but to Turkish mystic poets, was the work of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) which, 'By its ecstatic violence of exuberant feelings and visions exceeded all that had ever been written in Persian poetry.'<sup>2</sup>

A considerable boon for Turkish literature, whose first works in the territory of Asia Minor appeared precisely in the 13th century and were connected with mysticism, proved the fact that this great Persian mystic lived and worked at Konya.<sup>3</sup> Rumi's poetry with its deep human ideas, although written in Persian, became a part of Turkish literature.<sup>4</sup> As the official language under the rule of the Saljuq dynasty, Persian, along with Arabic, maintained a significant position also in the Ottoman empire. Consequently, the educated urban strata, also the men of letters, could study Rumi's work in its original version. As borne out by numerous commentaries on his

*Mathnawi*<sup>5</sup> (and thanks to the language of symbols and metaphors referred to above, as also allusions to various religious and literary sources), Rumi's poetry proved a hard nut even to a Persian familiar with Sufi problems.

The greatest credit for the fact that Jalaluddin Rumi's message became an organic and constructive element of Turkish literature, undoubtedly goes to Yunus Emre. He translated the philosophical and ethical principles comprised in the work of the Persian mystic in readable Turkish, using concepts and images accessible to the simple folk. Through Yunus Emre's poetry valuable principles of humanism in terms of a philosophy of life, interest in man and his ethical essence, for which Sufism drew on the experience and concepts of various past civilizations reached deep into the consciousness of the masses of Anatolia. For centuries it moulded their world outlook and moral ideals.

Love is a cardinal concept in Sufism. As a mobilizing principle a cosmic strength controlling every form of motion and simultaneously, a purifying strength permitting man to detach himself from his earthbound existence and lift himself to God. Love along with beauty is one of God's attributes. Whoever finds in his heart room for love of men and perceives the beauty of the real world which is the result of an act of God's creation a reflection of God Himself, he alone can encompass divine love and beauty.

God permits the whole wide world  
Yet His truth is revealed to none  
You better seek Him in yourself  
You and He aren't apart you are One.<sup>6</sup>

These verses of Yunus Emre constitute a poignant expression of the God-man relation in terms of the concept of a unity of being, *Wahdat al Wujud*, explained in detail by the Arab mystic Ibn-i-Arabi (1165-1240). This concept, further amplified into a pantheistic model, by Jalaluddin Rumi, left a significant mark on the works of entire generations of Sufis of Asia Minor.

ACCORDING to the conception of ‘unity of being’, man is a microcosm in which are encompassed all the attributes of the macrocosm. Therefore, a human being cannot arrive at the knowledge and comprehension of the Absolute without knowledge of the self. That is why Yunus Emre considers self-knowledge the basis of all cognition.

Knowledge should mean a full grasp of knowledge:  
Knowledge means to know yourself, heart and soul.  
If you have failed to understand yourself,  
Then all of your reading has missed its call.<sup>7</sup>

THE aim of self-analysis is not merely self-knowledge, but, simultaneously, also self-perfection and purification of one’s ‘spiritual heart.’ Uniquely, he who has succeeded in removing evil, hate, envy, pride from his heart is able to become conscious of his unity with God, figuratively speaking, to achieve a lovers’ union, to find eternal life within himself.

THE topic of death has a significant place in Yunus Emre’s work, with stress on the didactic aspect. For one who lived without the love not only of God but also of man, who has only amassed material goods, his physical extinction spells real catastrophe. The poet sees true wealth in generosity, and considers charity to be man’s sacred obligation. Greed provokes hatred and dissension, while moderation and temperance creates preconditions for understanding and tolerance.

LIKE Jalaluddin Rumi, Yunus Emre also lays emphasis on national and religious tolerance. A tolerant approach to other faiths is a characteristic feature of great Sufis. It derives from the premise that the love of God is common to all the professions of faith and hence they differ solely by their external expressions while their inner essence is the same. According to Ibn-i-Arabi all religions are a manifestation of a single Truth, and the existence of various practices only goes to prove ‘the unity of being’ and the universal immanence of God. Mansur al Hallaj (d. 923) was convinced that while God is eternal, constant and immutable, the roads leading to Him are diverse and He determines for man along which one of them he is to set out towards Him.

PROOF of the tolerance with which Sufism, specifically those of its forms that flourished in Asia Minor, approached other faiths, and their adherents, is provided by the fact that the Armenians, Vartan and Mecnuni, who lived in the 18th century, were remarkable exponents of mystic poetry, and belonged to the Bektashi Brotherhood.

BEKTASHIYA, connected by name and origin with the legendary figure of Sufi Haji Bektash Veli (d. circa 1297) originated from Khurasan and played an important role in the political and social life of the Ottoman empire. Despite an inclination towards Shiism, Christian elements and relics of Shamanism in religious practice, the Bektashiya Brotherhood enjoyed great favour at the court and was allied to the elite corps of the Janissaries. In contrast to the Mevlaviya Brotherhood which produced several outstanding poets and composers and the majority of whose adherents were from the educated urban strata, the bulk of the Bektashiya was recruited from popular masses in the countryside. Therefore, the literary works of the Bektashis come close to popular poetry. Their religious hymns were derived from the tradition of the poetry of the Ozans, folk poets in Turkic nomad tribes.<sup>8</sup> As the poetry of the Ozans, so also these lyrical confessions of the love of God had a syllabic metre, their rhythmics were adapted to their recital, accompanied by a musical instrument.

BEKTASHIYA gave numerous talented poets to Turkish literature. Their poetry overlapped with that of the Ashiks in which, similar to the works of the Bektashis, elements both of original Turkish and Arabic-Persian poetry were found. Literature, born in hospices of Bektashiya and other Brotherhoods (Tekke, or Zumre Edebiyati), stands at the divide between court literature and works of folklore. It forms a connecting link between them. A poetic expression and generalization of ideas and ideals in Sufism was no exclusive domain of Shaiks and Dervishes; many unique works on mystical topics come from foremost representatives of the Divan literature and eminent Ashiks. Both the classical and folk erotics made ample use of the abundant symbolism developed in Persian mysticism and enriched with Turkish folk tradition.

SUFISM, striving for man's perfection and his moral improve-

ment, not solely in terms of Islamic principles, but also of universal, humanitarian morality, made a significant contribution in forming social relationships within the Islamic world, and influenced its mode of life, culture and art. It was one of the important factors influencing the development of the literature of the Turks in Asia Minor from its beginnings in the 13th century up to modern Turkish literature, which is associated with the orientation of Turkish society to the civilizing and cultural model of the West.

SUFISM had taken rather deep roots in Asia Minor. Although after establishment of the Turkish Republic, its influence considerably declined as a result of numerous reforms designed to weaken the hold of Islam, given the goal of a speedy Europeanization of the young State. Specifically due to the proscription of the activities of the *Tariqats* in 1925, it declined, but never disappeared completely from the life of the society, and hence, also from literature. During the course of centuries, Sufism became an organic part and parcel of the cultural traditions of the Turks. Its influence, therefore, was necessarily transferred into literary works that have been created during the past seventy years.

WORKS by the Ashiks have preserved a continuity of tradition from Yunus Emre to the most recent times. Not only poetry of the greatest Turkish folk poet of this century Asik Veysel (1894-1973), but likewise that of a representative of the young generation, Ezeli (b. 1963) is permeated with fervent love of God and man, and stands for moral ideals preached by Jalaluddin Rumi and Yunus Emre. The poetry of contemporary Ashiks remains true towards tradition also in the sense that it takes up a critical attitude towards all social disorders, an attitude which was characteristic of the works of the most prominent among Turkish Sufis in the past.

Poetry was generally connected with traditional models and, therefore, is an appropriate vehicle for Sufi thought. Short stories and novels by some Turkish authors also bear traces of the impact of Sufism. Until 1923, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu (1883-1974) was

an adherent of Sufism; he saw its contribution in tolerance and freedom of thought.<sup>9</sup> After the constitution of the Turkish Republic, he supported Ataturk's principle of laicism. In his monograph *Ataturk* (1946) he clearly testifies to the writer's return to religion.

ANOTHER classical writer of modern Turkish literature Sabahattin Ali (1907-1948), oscillated between the ideas of Sufism and socialism, as expressed in the title of the monograph devoted to this writer by the authoress Elizabeth Siedel.<sup>10</sup> Islamic mysticism influenced Sabahattin Ali's early literary creations. His short stories and poems were based on a contradiction between the inner and the outer world. During the subsequent period this was replaced by an antagonism between the world of the rich, the powerful and that of the poor and the weak.<sup>11</sup> During World War II, Sabahattin Ali returned to mysticism in his 1943 novel *Kurk Mantolu Madonna* (Madonna in a Fur Coat).

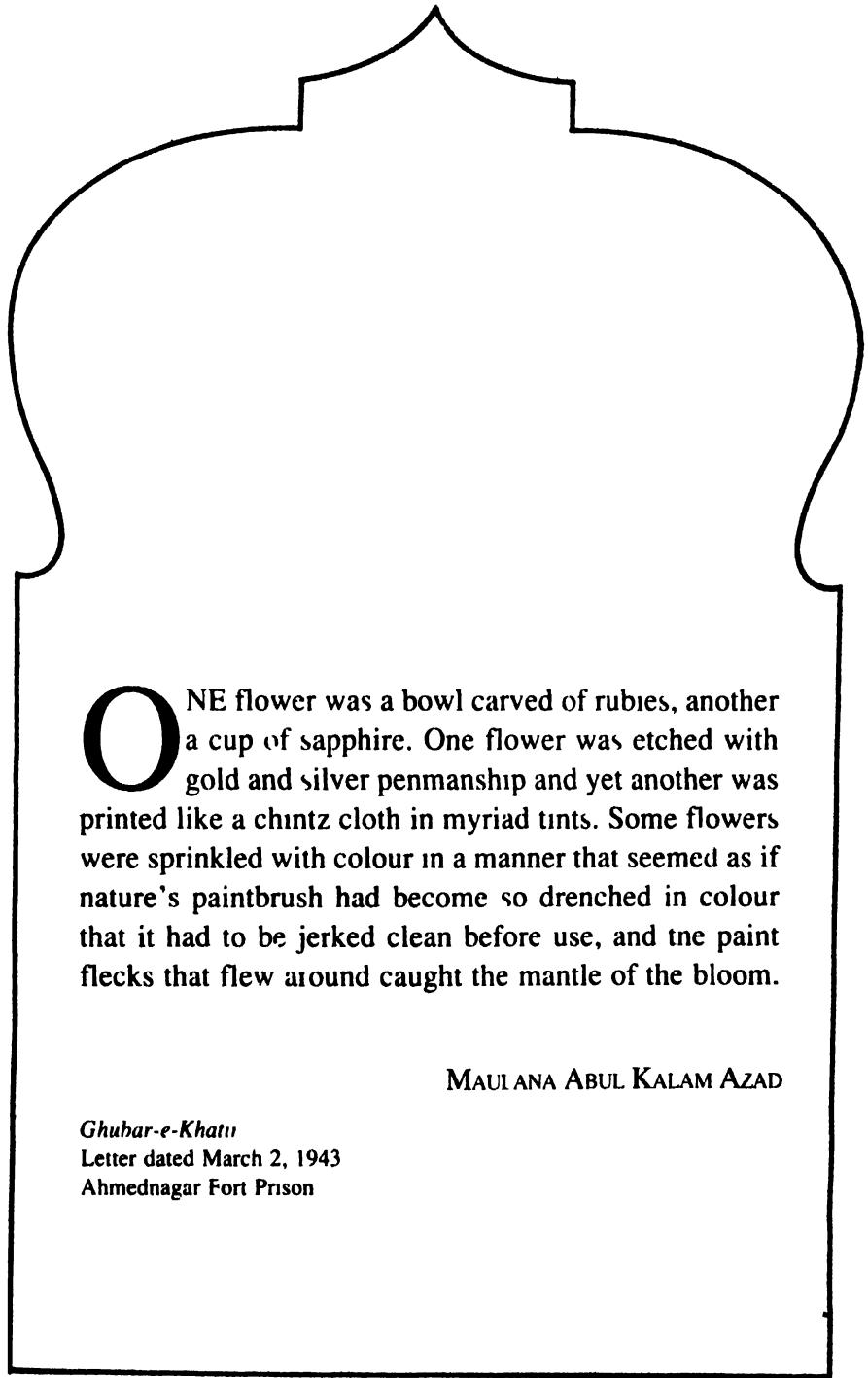
THE relationship between Turkish literature and Sufism is an extremely difficult and challenging topic. The present paper has pointed to only some of its aspects. In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that these relations remain, as far as I know, outside the scope of scholarly interest, consequently, their evaluation cannot be complete.

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2. Rypka, J.: *Dejiny novoperske literatury az do zacatu XX. stoleti/History of Newpersian literature up to early 20th century/*. In: *Dejiny perske a tadžické literatury/History of Persian and Tajik Literature/*. Prague, CSAV 1963, p. 204.
3. From the first literary work in the West-Turkic dialect, *Mâthnawî 'Carhname/Book of Destiny*, the author of which was Ahmed Faqih/d. about 1252/, only 83 couplets have been preserved. The bilingual Sultan Veled (1226-1312), Jalaluddin Rumi's son, is the author of 376 Turkish verses. Also Yunus Emre's poetry

ranks among the first Turkish literary works in Asia Minor.

4. Professor Fuat Koprulu, The foremost expert on *Turkish history and literature* conditions an understanding of works on the early period of Turkish literature by a knowledge of Jalaluddin Rumi's work. See Koprulu, F.: *Turk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavviflar/The first mystics in Turkish literature/*. Ankara, Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi Yayınlari 1984, p. 227.
5. Nicholson, R.A., Some of these commentaries are quoted *The Methnewi of Jalaluddin Rumi*. London, Cambridge University Press 1937. Vol. VII., p. xii.
6. Talat Sait Halman, A translation of Talat Sait Halman. In: *Yunus Emre and His Mystical Poetry*. Edited Bloomington, Indiana University 1981, p. 141.
7. ibid., 144.
8. 'A fact that undoubtedly contributed to the spread of the ideas of Sufism among nomad Turks was that the Sheiks (Ata, Bab) took up the place of the Ozans and propagated Sufism in the form proper to the latter.' Koprulu, F.: *Turk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavviflar*, p. 18.
9. From the period when pessimistically-minded Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu sought an escape from this troubled world in Sufism (for a time he also took part in religious assemblies of the Bektashis, which however, failed to satisfy him, a fact that was reflected in his critically-tuned novel *Nur Baba*-1922), we have his essays *Erenlerin Bagindan* (*From the Orchard of the Initiated*, 1922) and *Yunus Emre* (1923). For more detailed information see Yavuz, K.: *Der Islam in Werken moderner turkischer Schriftsteller*, Freiburg im Breisgau, Klaus Schwarz Verlag 1974, pp. 142-147.
10. Siedel, E.: *Sabahattin Ali, Mystiker und Sozialist. Beiträge zur Interpretation eines modernen türkischen Autors*. Berlin, Klaus Schwarz Verlag 1983.
11. ibid., 211. □



ONE flower was a bowl carved of rubies, another a cup of sapphire. One flower was etched with gold and silver penmanship and yet another was printed like a chintz cloth in myriad tints. Some flowers were sprinkled with colour in a manner that seemed as if nature's paintbrush had become so drenched in colour that it had to be jerked clean before use, and the paint flecks that flew around caught the mantle of the bloom.

MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD

*Ghubar-e-Khatu*

Letter dated March 2, 1943  
Ahmednagar Fort Prison



**SUFISM  
AND  
THE ARTS**



# **Impact of Sufi Saints on Indian Society and Culture**

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**Khaliq Ahmad Nizami**

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**S**URVEYING the role of mystics in the growth of civilizations, Professor Toynbee remarks:

It is through the inward development of personality that individual human beings are able to perform those creative acts, in the outward field of action, that cause the growth of human societies.<sup>1</sup>

THE contribution that Muslim mystics made to the social and cultural life of mediaeval India illustrates the validity of this remark. India, with her multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-lingual pattern of society, has always looked with hope and confidence towards men imbued with high moral ideals who could, in the words of Rabindranath Tagore, 'Set to naught all differences of men by the overflow of their consciousness of God.'<sup>2</sup> The Sufi saints of India belong to this category of 'God-conscious men' who rose above all narrow and parochial divisions of society and strove to find a unity for the heterogeneous elements that make up its totality. Their social ideal is very neatly epitomised in the verse:

لگان بودن و یکشان ز پشم آموز که در پشم جاده جانی شوند

Learn from the eyes the way to develop unity and oneness.

The two eyes appear different but their vision is one.

They directed their efforts towards the creation of a healthy social order, free from dissensions and conflicts. In love, faith, toleration and sympathy they found the supreme talisman of human happiness. Here only a broad review of the direction of mystic thought and its impact on Indian society has been attempted.

EXPLAINING the *elan* of mystic life, Shah Kalimullah of Delhi (ob. 1729) once observed that a Sufi's heart is always focused towards God and man. Apparently the directions seem different, but basically they are one, because he who desires to love God has necessarily to learn to love His creatures. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya used to cite a remark of Shaikh Junaid of Baghdad: 'I found God among the poor people in the streets of Medina,'<sup>3</sup> meaning, thereby, that it was by identifying with the problems of the poor and helping them in their struggle in life that a man could reach the spiritual goal.

THIS approach towards human beings had its roots in the mystic concept of God. For a Sufi, God is neither a theological myth nor a logical abstraction of Unity, but an all-embracing Reality present in his ethical, intellectual and aesthetic experience and furnishing the inspiration for creating an ideal realm of values—the Kingdom of Heaven—in a distressed and struggling world. Shaikh Ali Hujwiri, popularly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh begins his book *Kashf al-Mahjub* with an anecdote illustrating how consciousness of the Divine Presence transforms human thought and behaviour.<sup>4</sup> It makes man a citizen of that universal society in which God is Supreme Intelligence and all human beings are His manifestations.

SHAIKH Nizamuddin Auliya very often used to quote Shaikh Abu Said Abul-Khair (ob. AD 1049) who, on being asked about the ways that led to God, remarks:

بعد ہر زرہ از موجودات را ہے جن است آنایچ را ہے نزدیک تراز راحت  
رسانیدن بد لیا نیست، ماہرچ یا فتح دریں راہ یا فتح و بدیں وصیت می کنم۔

The ways to God are as numerous as particles of beings, but there is no shorter way than bringing happiness to the hearts of men. Whatever I have achieved, it has been achieved through this and I advise you to follow this path.

The mystic teachers therefore advised their followers:

دل بدست آور کج اکبر است از ہزار اکابر یک دل بہتر است

Bringing solace to human heart is like *Hajj-i Akbar*.  
One heart is better than a thousand Kaabas.

TRANSLATING these spiritual ideals of human love and goodwill into practice, the Sufi saints identified religion with service to humanity and propounded a revolutionary concept of *tu, at* (devotion of God). When asked about the highest form of devotion of God, Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti of Ajmer remarked that it was nothing but:

درمانگان را فریاد رسیدن، و حاجتے بے چارگان روکردن و  
گرسنگان را سیر گردانیدن۔

To redress the misery of those in distress, to fulfil the needs of the helpless and to feed the hungry.

SHAIKH Nizamuddin Auliya elaborated the same concept in his categorization of *taat* into *lazimi* and *motaaddi*. He said:

Devotion to God (*taat*) is of two types: *lazimi* (intransitive) and *motaaddi* (transitive). In the *lazimi* devotion the benefit that accrues is confined to the devotee alone. This type of devotion includes prayer, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca, recitation of religious formulae, turning the beads of rosary, etc..... The *motaaddi* devotion, on the other hand, brings advantage and comfort to others; it is performed by spending money on others; showing affection to people and by other means through which a man strives to

help his fellow human beings. The reward of *motaaddi* devotion is endless and limitless.<sup>7</sup>

**SHAIKH** Jamaluddin of Hansi, a senior disciple of Shaikh Farid Ganj-i Shakar, remarks:

يَا أَحْمَدَ لَا يَتَالُ الْمَقْصُودُ بِكَثْرَةِ الصَّلَاةِ وَالصَّيَامِ إِلَّا  
يَتَالُ بِقَضَاءِ حَوَائِجِ الْأَنْهَامِ -

Oh Ahmad! The (mystic) objective cannot be achieved through performance of extraordinary number of prayers and fasts, but by fulfilling the needs of the people.

In support of this attitude towards human beings in general, the mystics cited a Tradition of the Prophet which runs:

الرَّحْمَنُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى - ارْحَمُوا مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَرْحَمُكُمْ  
مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ

Graciously kind is God, the Holy, the High. Show kindness to those who dwell on earth so that the grace of God may descend upon you from above.

With these revolutionary concepts of God, man and religion, the Muslim mystics entered the Indian social scene and preached 'Unity of God' and 'Brotherhood of Man'—from which emanated the entire structure of their thought and the pattern of their behaviour. Faith in the Unity of Godhead led them to the belief that all humanity was basically one; faith in the 'brotherhood of man' deepened the sources of their humanism and benevolence. They emphasized the dignity of man as man by rejecting all caste taboos, opened the doors of religious education for all and sundry, and brought spiritual salvation within reach of all human beings. Thus they paved the way for a common ground of religious and moral effort for all social and cultural groups of India. Viewed in its proper perspective, the *elan* of Sufi activity was towards creating a feeling of spiritual affinity and oneness by emphasizing that the 'way to God' did not pass through

the lanes and by-lanes of caste, color or creed. The world of spirit knew no artificial distinction between one man and another.

## Basic Oneness of Human Society

AFTER throwing open the realm of spirit to all without any distinction of religion and race, the Sufi saints emphasized the basic unity and oneness of human society. This was the corner-stone of their social thought. Deriving their inspiration from a Tradition of the Prophet which runs:

All God's creatures are His family; and he is the most beloved of God who does most good to His creatures.<sup>10</sup>

They treated all human beings as 'children of God on earth' and strove to bring their hearts closer and inspired them with a deep and abiding feeling of human love and sympathy. Even denominational categories which separated one community from another, were not acceptable to them. Shaikh Abdul-Quddus of Gangoh (ob. 1537) once said:<sup>11</sup>

ایچ شور داں چ خونا کشادہ، نے مون، کے کافر، کے طیب، کے ماضی،  
کے در راہ، کے بے راہ، کے مسلم، کے پارس، کے مدد، کے ترس،  
مہے دریک سک است۔

Why this meaningless talk about the believer, the Kafir, the obedient, the sinner, the rightly guided, the misdirected, the Muslim, the pious, the infidel, the fire worshipper. All are like beads in a rosary.

There was no such thing as *dar al-harb* or *dar al-Islam* for a mystic. All was God's earth and they believed that,

مرد خدا بشرق و غرب فربنیت ہر جاکہ ہی روہ ہر ملک خدا ہے اورست

No man of God feels himself a stranger in East or West. Wherever he goes all is the land of God.<sup>12</sup>

This vast perspective of basic human unity and oneness inspired the thought and behaviour of the Sufi saints of India. For them, man was a man first and everything else afterwards. Shaikh Hamiduddin of Nagaur, a distinguished disciple of Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti of Ajmer, ignored all apparent religious categories and called a Hindu *Wali* (friend of God).<sup>13</sup> A man's inner spiritual condition and his perseverance in devotion to God were the things that mattered and not the label that was put on him. Shah Waliullah of Delhi (ob. 1762) considered human individual as *insan-i saghir* (small man) and humanity as a whole as *insan-i-kabir* (big man). His conviction was that all that contributes to unity and oneness of human society is a life-promoting process; whatever disturbs peace and amity tends to amputate the limbs of the body.<sup>14</sup> Saadi's verse, very neatly, represents the viewpoint of the Sufis:

نہ آدم اعضا کے یک دیگر انہ کا راز آن فرش زیک جو مسلمان

All human beings are like limbs of a body,  
For in their origin they are from the same substance.

The Sufis thus carried the concept of the oneness of human society still further and propounded 'unity of human origin'. In a social surrounding where the higher classes claimed origin from the sun or the moon and different castes were assigned different sources of origin, this concept paved the way for introduction of egalitarian principles in the life of the people belonging to different strata of society.

THE concept of 'high' and 'low', *sharif* and *razil* or 'master' and 'slave', which formed the basis of many mediaeval societies, was gall and wormwood to the mystics.<sup>15</sup> They believed that there was only one basis of superiority of one man over another and that was piety (*taqwa*).<sup>16</sup> But even this type of excellence was not the exclusive monopoly of any individual or group. By declaring that *muttaqi* (pious) and *taib* (repentant) are equal,<sup>17</sup> they opened the door of superiority through *taqwa* to even a repentant sinner. In India, the

Sufis directed their energies to combating the idea of caste and physical pollution which, in their view, cut across the very concept of the oneness of human society.

AL-BIRUNI has described in detail the social condition of India in the eleventh century.<sup>18</sup> It appears from his account that the principle of caste, which formed the basis of the Indian social system at that time, had eaten into its very vitals. Whatever the circumstances under which the system originated, it had resulted in the total annihilation of any sense of citizenship or of loyalty to the country as a whole. The principle of caste, 'Strikes at the root of individuality and amounts almost to a denial of personality.'<sup>19</sup> Added to this was the idea of physical contamination Al-Biruni has noted with disgust and amazement the working of this idea in the social life of the people. The workers and artisans—known as *Hadis*, *Domas*, *Chandalas* and *Badhatus*—and the non-descript mass of humanity known as *Antyajas* who had to live outside the cities, were deprived of all amenities of civic life. The Muslim mystics did not approve of this classification of society. They built their hospices outside the caste-cities in the midst of the non-caste people. A statistical analysis of the earliest Indian entrants to the mystic fold would reveal that many of them belonged to the *Antyaja* group—makers of baskets, sellers of curd, rope-makers, etc.

### **Adoption of the Attributes of God by Man**

IT was necessary for the one who cherished 'love of God' as an ideal of life to 'develop the attributes of God'.<sup>20</sup> Since *Rububiyyat*<sup>21</sup> is an attribute of God, it was necessary for a mystic to be benevolent towards all His creatures. God provided the benefits of the sun, water and earth to all human beings, irrespective of their caste, color, creed or character. So also a mystic was expected to inculcate the virtues which made him look upon all human beings as equally entitled to his benevolence. Any distinction

between one man and another on the basis of religion or race defeated the divine purpose of life and did not fit in with the *Weltanschauung* of the Sufis. Shaikh Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer told his disciples that the qualities which endeared a man to God were:

اول سخاوتے چون سخاوت دیتا، دوم شفقتے چون شفقت آنتاب،  
سیوم تواضع چون تواضع زین۔

First, river-like generosity; secondly, sun-like affection; and thirdly earth-like hospitality.

ANY discrimination between man and man in matters of charity was therefore, reprehensible. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, once narrated to his audience the story of a Bedouin who used to pray to God to have benevolence on him and the Prophet and none else. When the Prophet came to know of this, he admonished him: 'Why do you thus limit the mercy of God ? His benevolence is '*amm* (for all).'<sup>23</sup> He advised his visitors thus:

Give food to every one [whoever needs it] whether you know him or not.....The Prophet Abraham did not take his meals unless there were guests with him. One day a polytheist was his guest. When Abraham saw that he was a *baygana* (stranger) he did not give food to him. Divine admonition came to him: 'O Abraham! We can give life to him but you cannot give food to him.'<sup>24</sup>

As a necessary concomitant of this approach towards society, the mystics appreciated those works of the rulers which were intended to benefit all human beings. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, told his audience that Iltutmish, whose military and administrative achievements otherwise entitle him to a place of eminence in Indo-Muslim history, received divine mercy and salvation on account of the construction of Haud-i Shamsi,<sup>25</sup> which provided water to all people of Delhi without any discrimination.

## Moral Regeneration of Society

'POLLUTION (*janabat*) is of two types,' Shaikh Ruknuddin Abulfath of Multan is reported to have remarked, 'Of the heart and of the body. Physical pollution is the result of intercourse with women; pollution of the heart is due to bad company. Physical pollution can be removed through ablution with ordinary water but to wash off pollution of heart one needs the water of eyes.'<sup>26</sup> Bad company<sup>27</sup> produced vices like convivialism, back-biting, scandal-mongering, parasitism, etc. and ultimately disturbed the moral equilibrium of society and developed sin and immorality among people.

WHOEVER wished moral well-being of society, his first duty was to fight within himself all evil thoughts. Self-criticism, in order to purify one's own life, was instrumental in creating an ideal realm of values.<sup>28</sup> The mystics thought that if one carried on an incessant struggle in one's own life against baser appetites and demands of lower self (*nafs*), one performed a *jihad-i akbar* (great *jihad*), which was higher and nobler than an armed struggle against the enemies of God.<sup>29</sup>

It was one's moral duty to stop crime and check vice and immorality in society. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya once cited the following Traditions of the Prophet,<sup>30</sup> while exhorting people to exert themselves and direct their energies towards elimination of sin from society:

- (1) 'When a crime is committed at a place and one who is present there is displeased with it, it is as if he was not at all present there; if one is not present there but is pleased at the commission of that crime, it is as if he was present there.'
- (2) 'Whoever saw a sinful act being done and felt pleased at it, it is as if he has himself committed it.'
- (3) 'If a sinful act is committed in the west and one living in the east tolerates it, it is as if he participated in that act.'

If a man can prevent the commission of any sin or crime by persuasion, he should use his tongue to stop it; if he can stop it by hand, he should not hesitate to use it; if he can neither use tongue nor hand, he should at least have condemnation and disapproval for the act in his heart.

THE root cause of social malaise, in the eyes of the Sufis, was excessive indulgence in material pursuits. The more one got involved in such activities, the farther he drifted from the real source of spiritual enlightenment and bliss. Wordsworth has epitomized in these lines the attitude of the mystics of all religions:

*Getting and spending we lay waste our powers.  
Little we see in nature that is ours.*

Too much absorption in materialistic affairs, deadened a man's finer spiritual sensibilities and made him selfish and ego-centric. The best way to live in this world was to live like a swan as a mystic poet says:

مگر رسم تلقن دل از مرغانی جوں ز آب برناست خلک پر بُنات

O Heart! Learn the style of living in this world from the swan.

When it comes out of water: its feathers are all dry.

Lethargy and parasitism were also condemned as social vices. Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani very often spoke against these vices in his sermons,<sup>31</sup> and his tradition was followed by the Indian mystics also. Shaikh Hamiduddin Sufi went to the extent of saying that an indolent person stood on the border of *Kufr*.<sup>32</sup> Whoever ate from some doubtful source, spoiled his prayers and penitences. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya once quoted the following saying of Caliph 'Ali:

One will have to account [on the Day of Judgement] for things obtained through legal means and would have to undergo punishment for things procured through illegal means.<sup>33</sup>

Ibrahim b. Adham was once asked about the *Ism-i Azam* (name of God, the repetition of which is considered highly efficacious in the fulfillment of one's prayers and desires). He replied: 'If you keep your stomach free from food gained through illegal means and your heart free from worldly love, whatever name of Allah you would utter and invoke would be as effective as *Ism-i Azam*.'<sup>34</sup>

All vices had to be shunned and despised, but there were certain acts which had to be condemned because of their baneful impact on society. Indulgence in blackmarketing and hoarding was the expression of a morbid desire to take advantage of human misery.<sup>35</sup> Mystics went to the extent of suggesting social boycott of all those guilty of these social crimes.<sup>36</sup> In the eyes of Shaikh Hamiduddin Sufi the most reprehensible aspect of *ihtikar* (hoarding) was that the happiness of a hoarder increased with the increase in the misery of the poor people.<sup>37</sup> Sayyid Jalaluddin Bukhari thus explained the implications of *ihtikar*:<sup>38</sup>

It means hoarding of corn. If one who cultivates land stores the corn with the intention of consuming it oneself through the year, it is permitted; if the purpose of hoarding is to sell when prices shoot up, it is *ihtikar*.

He considered it a duty of the state to order hoarders to sell what is over and above the yearly requirement of their families.<sup>39</sup> Sayyid Mohammad Gesu Daraz of Gulbarga narrated with approbation the action of an honest merchant who ordered his agents, who had waited to sell his corn till the prices went up, to dole out the entire stock in charity as atonement for their misdeed in withholding the grain.<sup>40</sup>

Mystic efforts to improve the moral tone of society did not fail to have their effect. In fact the *khanqahs* acted as a counterweight in maintaining the moral equilibrium of mediaeval society. Barani informs us that as a result of the teachings of contemporary saints, particularly Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, the incidence of crime had decreased in Delhi (جاتی مردان ساری کم شدہ بود).<sup>41</sup> The establishment of Turkish rule in India was followed by an urban revolution which,

while on one hand, converted the caste-cities into cosmopolitan-cities, on the other, led to the growth of *tarabahads*, taverns, pleasure centres, etc. In most cases the state machinery, as represented by the Department of *Ihtisab* (censorship of public morals), found itself helpless or ineffective.<sup>42</sup> The mystics held aloft the principles of morality and inculcated in their visitors a sense of moral responsibility which helped in saving the society from vice and corruption.

### Inculcation of the True Spirit of Toleration

A mind which failed to see any wisdom or truth in any way of life or thought except its own was the greatest obstacle to the growth of social amity, and the Sufis of mediaeval India fought against this exclusivism and prejudice. But their toleration was not born of any timely purpose, expediency or weakness. It had its roots in the spiritual and moral strength of their convictions. In fact, the spirit of toleration can arise from very different attitudes of the mind of man. As Gibbon says, there is the toleration of the philosopher to whom all religions are equally false and of the politician to whom religions are equally useful. There is the toleration of the man who tolerates other modes of thought and behaviour because he has himself grown absolutely indifferent to all modes of thought and behaviour. There is the toleration of the weak man who, on account of sheer weakness, must pocket all kinds of insults heaped on things or persons whom he holds dear. Iqbal has correctly observed that this type of tolerance has no ethical value.<sup>43</sup> It unmistakably reveals the spiritual impoverishment of the man who practises it. True toleration is of that spiritually powerful man who, while guarding the frontiers of his own faith, can appreciate all forms of faith other than his own. Khusrau's verse,

یے کر غزبت ہے سندھی میزوے آموز پرستش گری

*O you who sneer at the idolatry of the Hindu,  
Learn also from him how worship is done*

is an expression of this toleration of a spiritually powerful man. When Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya remarked on seeing the Hindu worshiping the idols,<sup>44</sup>

ہر قوم راست را ہے دینے و فبدھ ہے

*Every people have got their path, their religion and  
their house of worship*

he not only gave to his followers a lesson in religious toleration but illustrated for all time an ideal of religious co-existence and amity that Indian society had to cherish and strive for.

### **Impact on Indian Religious Attitude and Rise of the Bhakti Saints**

It appears from Al-Biruni's account of India that at that time caste taboos had eaten into the very vitals of society. Religion, in every form, theoretical and institutional—education, scriptures, salvation and houses of worship—was denied to non-caste people. Spiritual communion with God was not possible for them. The Sufis zealously struggled against this situation. Hardly two centuries had passed in their efforts in this direction when the Indian milieu underwent a change and religious leadership sprang up from those sections of society which were denied access to even the religious literature. The saints of the Bhakti school, like Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, Dhanna, Pipa, Sain, Chaitanya and others, filled the atmosphere with ideas of religious and social equality. Many of these Bhakti saints had spent some time with the Sufis in the *khanqahs*. It was under their influence that the Bhakti saints (a) rejected caste and proclaimed egalitarian principles, (b) opened religious knowledge for all, and (c) declared that God was one and was approachable by all human beings.

APART from its tremendous spiritual significance, monotheism acts as a great integrating force in human society. When the saints of the Bhakti school propounded their monotheistic concepts, they in

fact took the first significant step towards the integration of various religious and social components of Indian society. The Bhakti saints were averse to the idea of caste and treated all human beings as made of the 'self-same clay.' They gave to their followers, who were mostly men belonging to the lower strata of society, the message that direct communion with God was possible for them. The opening of the door of divine communion for all people was full of tremendous possibilities of spiritual self-confidence. In fact, many of the saints of the Bhakti school belonged to the lower strata of society and came from the class of weavers, cobblers, tanners, carders, etc.<sup>45</sup> Why of all other sections of society this class should raise its standard of revolt against discrimination in society and ecclesiastical formalism, and embark upon spreading a message of love and harmony among all culture-groups, is inexplicable except with reference to the role of Sufis in bringing about a quiet revolution in the social thought of India. They taught that the 'Divine disclosed itself in the human race as a whole' and that it is possible for all human beings—irrespective of their caste, colour or creed—to have direct communion with Him. God speaks in Kabir's verses:

If thou art a true seeker I shall meet thee immediately  
in a moment's search.<sup>46</sup>

Linguistic analysis of the works of the Bhakti saints reveals deep impact of Persian mystic literature, language and ideas. It is well known that the mystic terminology as evolved by the Muslim saints is not only capable of expressing the most subtle spiritual experiences but is thoroughly original and illuminating. The Bhakti saints adopted it as the most effective and useful vehicle for the expression of their spiritual states, both *haal* (condition) and *maqam* (station). Kabir uses a language which is so saturated with Sufi ideas that it is difficult to deny the influence of Muslim mystic tradition on his mind. Nearly two hundred Arabic and Persian words have been found in his work, and these words are from Sufi lore and convey Kabir's spiritual message in terms which had come to assume definite connotation. No

one ignorant of Sufi tradition could have used this terminology with such confidence and clarity. The *Gulistan* and *Bustan* of Sadi, the *Pandnama* or Khwaja Fariduddin 'Attar and the *Mathnavi* of Jalaluddin Rumi, supplied to Kabir the warp and woof of his mystic thought. The *Guru Granth* has scores of Persian and Arabic words which show that Guru Nanak had come to acquire personal and intimate knowledge about the delicate concepts of Islamic mysticism. He absorbed and assimilated the teachings of Shaikh Farid Ganj-i Shakar<sup>47</sup> which were floating in the atmosphere and preserved them for posterity. 'His free use of Quranic terminology to express some of his theological views in his later writings,' writes Dr Trilochan Singh, 'shows that it is during this early period that he studied the Quran and other Islamic scriptures available to him.'<sup>48</sup> W.G.Orr observes about Dadu:

His fierce intolerance of caste and idolatry, his vivid consciousness of God as Creator, Ruler and Judge, and his emphasis on moral freedom and responsibility, are part of his Muslim inheritance.<sup>49</sup>

Dr Tarachand was of the opinion that as Dadu was the disciple of Kamal he had greater knowledge of Sufism than his predecessors.<sup>50</sup> In fact, the Bhakti movement in northern India during this period was largely inspired by the Sufi saints who had established their hospices in every part of the country.<sup>51</sup>

### **Three Levels of Mystic Effort**

To realise their objective of amity and harmony in human society, the Sufi saints of India worked at three levels—social, linguistic and emotional.

#### **(a) Social**

If the social milieu of the times is kept in view, it would appear that the Sufi *khanqahs* were the only place in mediaeval India where

people professing different religions, enjoying different social status and belonging to different backgrounds met and rubbed shoulders. Their free distribution of food (*langur*) to all; community living in the *jamaat khana*s where all lived and slept on the ground; their nonchalant attitude towards the kings; their practice of distributing among the needy and poor whatever came to them as gifts (*futuh*); instruction to sweep and clean the stores every day so that nothing of wordly goods remained to distract their attention and, above all, their readiness to listen sympathetically to the problem of every visitor, made them centres of love and affection for the Indian people. To the Chishti *khanqahs*, for instance, came the Hindus and the Muslims, the *jogis* and the *qalandars*, old and young, villagers and townfolk, men and women.<sup>52</sup> In the *khanqah* of Shaikh Farid of Ajodhan,<sup>53</sup> Sayyid Mohammad Gesu Daraz of Gulbarga,<sup>54</sup> Shaikh Ahmad Khattu of Ahmadabad,<sup>55</sup> Rishi Nuruddin of Kashmir and others, views were exchanged between the Sufis and the Yogis in an atmosphere of goodwill and understanding.

No social contact could be of any avail if there was no identification with the milieu. When the people found that the mystics had identified themselves with their life-conditions, the impact of their teachings became stronger and deeper. Shaikh Hamiduddin Sufi settled at Nagaur during the early years of the thirteenth century and adopted the life of a Rajasthani peasant. Clad in a loin cloth, thoroughly vegetarian in food habits and speaking the Hindivi language, he cultivated a *bigha* of land and refused to accept grant of villages from the Sultan of Delhi. His wife milked the cow like a Rajasthani woman and spun the cloth. His poverty and humanism attracted the people to his fold and he became the cynosure of their eyes.<sup>56</sup> Sayyid Mohammad Ghauth Shattari (ob. 1563), whom the famous singer Tan Sen looked upon as his spiritual mentor, was fond of bulls and cows which he kept, as his hobby, in large numbers. His genial and generous treatment of every Hindu visitor made his *khanqah* at Gwalior a haven of refuge for Hindus and Muslims alike.<sup>57</sup> The *rishi* saints of Kashmir likewise, adopted the local customs, developed vegetarian habits and

pulled down the barriers between different communities and culture groups. They ate *upalhak* which grows in Kashmir, as Baba Farid of Ajodhan lived on *pelu* and *dela* which grows in the Punjab.

### (b) Linguistic

THE attitude of the Sufi saints towards languages was free from all prejudices. Sana'i had said:

عَنْ كُنْبَرِ دِينِ گُونِ چُورَانِ پُرسِیاَنِ مَكَانِ کُنْبَرِ حَقِّ جَوَنِ چِجاَلْقاَجِ جَابَسَا

*What matters is whether the words thou utterest in  
prayer are Hebrew or Syrian,  
Or whether the place in which thou seekest God is  
Jabalqa or Jabalsa.*

Amir Khusrau, who was himself a great linguist, used to say that every language has a flavour of its own and so there should be no prejudice against any language. The contribution of the Sufi saints in the sphere of languages was that (a) they discouraged linguistic chauvinism, (b) developed the languages of different regions, and (c) evolved a common medium for the communication of ideas, known as Hindivi. Wherever the mystics settled, they strove to build linguistic bridges to establish contact with the local population. Their role in the evolution of vernacular languages in different regions of the country cannot be over-emphasized. They helped in the development of the Hindivi, the Punjabi, the Bengali, the Dakhani, the Gujarati and other regional languages. Significantly enough, in the early history of these languages it is the *khanqah* which stands out prominently as the main nursery where the languages of the elite and the language of the common man came together and paved the way for the emergence of new languages intelligible to both. In the family of Shaikh Hamiduddin Sufi, who lived in a small village of Nagaur, conversation was carried on in Hindivi.<sup>58</sup> In the *jamaat khana* of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i Shakar, the earliest Hindivi sentences were uttered.<sup>59</sup> The saint is reported to have prescribed spiritual litanies in the Punjabi dialect.<sup>60</sup> The writings of the Sufi saints in Dakhani and Bengali languages

opened new and effective channels of communication with the people around them. Rising above all linguistic prejudices, the Sufis considered it a social obligation to convey their basic ideas in the language of the masses. When Shah Waliullah thought of translating the *Quran* into Persian, he, in fact, acted upon a long established mystic tradition of bringing people closer to the main sources of religion. In his preface to *Fath al-Rahman*, he clearly states that in every age the demand of the time should be met and so he deemed it necessary to undertake this translation of the *Quran* for the welfare of all people, *khass* and '*amm*'.<sup>61</sup> Under changed circumstances Shah Waliullah's sons, Shah 'Abd al-Qadir and Shah Rafiuddin, translated the *Quran* into Hindivi. Shah Kalimullah directed his *khalifas* to instruct their disciples in their own mother tongue.<sup>62</sup> Shah Fakhrudin of Delhi suggested that Friday sermon (*khutba*) be delivered in Hindvi so that it is understood by the common people.<sup>63</sup> Shah Abdul-Aziz of Delhi (ob. 1823) told his disciples that the terms *Allah* and *Parmeshvar* were the same.<sup>64</sup> The mystic conviction was that real religious spirit could not be articulated in the people unless they were brought to the source of religious sciences. In the context of the Indian situation it was possible only when a common *lingua franca* was evolved. The Sufis were thus the real precursors of the Urdu language which they evolved and developed as a social necessity. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi,<sup>65</sup> Sayyid Mohammad Gesu Daraz of Gulbarga<sup>66</sup> and Khwaja Karak of Kara,<sup>67</sup> to name only a few, enjoyed hearing verses in Hindi. One day a visitor asked Sayyid Mohammad Gesu Daraz:

چہ بب است کہ البتہ زوئی صوفیاں در ہندوی بیشتر باشندہ

What is the reason that the Sufis have greater interest in  
Hindivi ?<sup>68</sup>

The saint replied that the language was more clear and bright and certain ideas could be better and more effectively expressed in it. Shaikh Ahmad Khattu, the renowned saint of Ahmedabad, recited verses in Gujarati.<sup>69</sup> We find in the Sufi houses, Hindivi forms of address like *bhai*,<sup>70</sup> *ma'i*,<sup>71</sup> *bhabi*,<sup>72</sup> *beta*.<sup>73</sup> Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya

in the typical Badauni dialect addressed boys as *lala*.<sup>74</sup> Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri,<sup>75</sup> Rizqullah Mushtaqi<sup>76</sup> and other saints composed verses in Hindivi. By adopting the language of the people around them, the Sufi saints accelerated the pace of social and emotional integration.

### (c) *Emotional and Ideological*

WHILE social contact paved the way for communication of ideas, and the development of a common vehicle of expression brought the people closer, the Sufis turned their attention towards ideological and emotional integration. Ideological integration was a long-drawn and slow process and remained confined to a segment of society comprising the higher intellectual class. But emotional integration which could be brought about through mystic songs (*qawwali*), community living in the *jamaat khanas* (big hall in a hospice where all lived and slept on the ground), and spiritual practices common to *Sufis*, *Jogis* and *Rishis* (concentration, control of breath, meditation, etc.) was easier and more fruitful.

THE most important ideological support to the Muslim mystic movement came from the concept of *Wahdat al Wujud* (Unity of Being or Pantheism). The *Upanishads* contain the earliest exposition of pantheistic ideas. Among Muslim mystics, Shaikh Muhyuddin Ibn Arabi (ob. 1240) was the greatest exponent of this philosophy. Most of the Sufi saints drew their ideological and spiritual strength from the pantheistic doctrines and constructed on its basis ideological bridges between Islam and Hinduism. One of the greatest exponents of Ibn 'Arabi's ideas in India was Shah Muhibbulah of Allahabad (ob. 1648). Dara Shikoh came into contact with him during the days of his governorship of Allahabad and was deeply influenced by his broad and cosmopolitan views. Once Dara asked him if religion permitted any discrimination between Hindus and Muslims. The saint wrote back in reply:<sup>77</sup>

Justice requires that the thought of the welfare of men should be uppermost in the minds of the rulers.

so that people might be protected from the tyranny of the officials. It does not matter if one is a Believer or a non-Believer. All human beings are the creatures of God. If one has such a feeling, one will not differentiate between a Believer and a non-Believer, and will show sympathy and consideration towards both. The Qur'an says and the *Futuhat* (*Futuhat-i Makkiya* of Ibn 'Arabi) has elucidated that the Prophet was sent as a mercy into all mankind.

At the intellectual level the process of integration was encouraged by men like Sayyid Mohammad Ghauth, Miyan Mir, Abdul-Rahman Chishti and Mirza Mazhar, to mention only one name each from the Shattari, Qadiri, Chishti, and Naqshbandi order. Mirza Mazhar (ob. 1781), a distinguished Naqshbandi saint of Delhi, looked upon the Vedas as a revealed book and explained some Hindu customs and practices in such a way that all orthodox criticism became irrelevant. He declared in firm tones:

کافر نہ گھن کے را بے دلیل قطعی آسان نہایہ دانست۔

You should not consider it easy to call anybody *kafir* without clear and firm reason.<sup>78</sup>

It is said that it was at the request of Shaikh Ibrahim, a *sajjadahnashin* of the *khanqah* of Shaikh Farid Ganj-i Shakar, that Guru Nanak composed his famous *Asa-ki-var* which is sung by the Sikhs early in the morning.<sup>79</sup> Similarly Kabir's teachings brought Hindus and Muslims closer. The Rishi movement of Kashmir illustrates the extent to which Islamic mystic tradition and Hindu mystic lore could be integrated and developed. Shaikh Nuruddin, the founder of the Rishi movement, presented Hindu ascetic traditions in Islamic garb. The renowned Savite mystic woman of Kashmir, Lalla, influenced his thought. According to Abu Fazl, the Rishis of Kashmir did not denounce men belonging to a different faith.<sup>80</sup> They believed in service to mankind and planted trees so that all men could benefit.<sup>81</sup> The control of breath (*prana-yama*) as practised by the

Natha Yogis, was practised by them also. The famous Shattari saint, Sayyid Mohammad Ghauth, sought to bring about an intellectual harmony between Hindu and Muslim religious thoughts through his *Bahr al-Hayat*. All these saints were inspired by the ideal:

ام دل از مسم زبان بتر است۔

### Mystic Attitude Towards Slavery

THE medieval world was crowded with slaves at all levels and of all types; from the *bandagan-i darbar*<sup>82</sup> (slaves of the court) to the common-place slaves; both male and female, purchased for domestic service by families with average means of livelihood. The mystics, in general, disliked the institution of slavery and advised their disciples, sometimes openly but very often by hint and suggestion, to free their slaves. Though we come across some slaves in the *khanqahs* and in the personal service of the saints,<sup>83</sup> they were actually liberated slaves or slaves who were given the facilities of freeborn citizens but were slaves merely on account of their background. Sometimes a slave was liberated in such a way that he could carry on any trade or profession but committed himself to pay something regularly to his master. Maulana Nur Turk had a slave who carried on the profession of carder and paid a *dirham* every day to the saint.<sup>84</sup>

WHAT did the Sufis think of slavery and what methods did they adopt to eradicate it from society? An instance may be cited from the tabletalks of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya as contained in *Fawaid-al-Fuad*. The Shaikh had a unique gift of turning every conversation to some social purpose or spiritual guidance Amir Hasan thus records the proceedings of one of his meetings:<sup>85</sup>

THE Shaikh said: 'Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri had a grandson, Sharafuddin. He lived in Nagaur. Over-powered by a desire to get himself enrolled among

the disciples of Shaikh Farid, he started from Nagaur. He had a slave-girl, valued at more or less one hundred tankas. The woman wove a handkerchief and gave it to her master. When Maulana Sharafuddin placed the handkerchief before the Shaikh, he remarked: 'May the Lord grant her freedom'...On leaving the Shaikh's presence, Maulana Sharafuddin reflected within himself: 'As the Shaikh has said that the woman will be set free, this will certainly come to pass. But she is a slave-girl of value and I cannot afford to set her free.' But then he thought: 'If this women is set free in another man's house, the reward (*thawab*) will be his (not mine). Why should not I set her free myself?' With this determination in mind, he came to the Shaikh and submitted: 'I have set her free.'

Amir Hasan thus records his own experience:<sup>86</sup>

I had a slave, Malih, whom I set free in gratitude for entering the discipleship of the Shaikh in the Shaikh's presence and obtained his blessings. Immediately the ex-slave, Malih, placed his forehead on the ground and was honoured by the Shaikh's discipleship.....The Shaikh said on this occasion: 'In this path there is no distinction between master and slave. The man who is perfect in the world of love, his affairs are set right.'

Malih, nevertheless, decided to remain with Amir Hasan and accompanied him to Deogir, not as a slave but as a comrade-servant.

ON another occasion, Amir Hasan took his slave Bashir to the Shaikh and submitted:<sup>87</sup>

'This slave says his prayers. For a long time he has been insisting that I should bring him to the Shaikh so that he may have the honour of becoming your disciple.' As the kingdom of the Shaikh is universal he accorded to my request. 'Do you permit him to become my disciple?' the Shaikh asked. 'Certainly', I replied. He extended the hand of discipleship to

Bashir, presented him with a cap and ordered: 'Go and say two *rak'ats* (genuflexions) of prayers.'

When the slave withdrew, the Shaikh related the following anecdote:

In olden days, a *durwesh* wearing an ornate cloak came from Bihar and put up at the house of Shaikh 'Ali Sijzi....This *durwesh* used to beg for money from all quarters. 'If you live in this house,' Shaikh 'Ali Sijzi said to him, 'Do not go about begging. I will give you something to live on.' He gave the *durwesh* five hundred *jitals*. The *durwesh* traded with the money and in a short time increased his capital to hundred *tankas* and purchased slaves with them. 'Take your slaves to Ghazni', Shaikh Ali advised, 'They will fetch a higher price there.' The *durwesh* acted on his advice. But he had one trustworthy slave to whom he had said: 'You become my disciple.' The slave became his disciple. The *durwesh* shaved off the slave's head, placed a cap over it and said: 'This is the cap of Sayyidi Ahmad.' Perhaps the *durwesh* belonged to his order. In short, when he reached Ghazni and sold his slaves, he made a lot of profit. Some people wanted to purchase this slave also. 'How can I sell him?' the *durwesh* said: 'He is my disciple.' But they insisted on purchasing him till the price rose from one to four. The mind of the *durwesh* changed and he consented to sell the slave. But when the merchants gathered to purchase the slave, the slave, his eyes full of tears, said to the *durwesh*: 'Khwaja, on the day I became your *murid* (disciple), you placed a cap on my head and said: 'This is the cap of Sayyidi Ahmad.' You are now going to sell me. Tomorrow on the Day of Judgment I will have a complaint against you before Sayyidi Ahmad.' When the slave said this, the *durwesh*'s heart was softened. He said to all present: 'You be witness to the fact that I have set this slave free.'

No sooner had the Shaikh finished this anecdote than Amir Hasan set his slave free. The Shaikh was immensely pleased. 'You have done

well.' he remarked. 'What you have done was necessary.' The Shaikh then took off his cap and placed it very affectionately on the head of Amir Hasan.<sup>88</sup>

WHEN all these aspects of mystic thought and activity are kept in view, one cannot help concurring with the opinion of Sir Hamilton Gibb that, 'From the thirteenth century Sufism increasingly attracted the creative social and intellectual energies within the community, to become the bearer or instrument of a social and cultural revolution.'<sup>89</sup>

### **Notes and References**

1. *Study of History* (abridged edition), London, 1960, p. 212
2. *Nationalism*, London, 1936, p. 6
3. Maulana 'Ali Jandir, *Durāt-i Nizāmi* (MS.), *Siyar al-Auliya'*, p. 358
4. *Kashf al-Mahjub* (tr. R A Nicholson), p. 13
5. *Siyar al-Auliya*, p. 411
6. ibid., p. 46
7. ibid., p. 411, *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad*, pp. 11-14
8. *Mulhamat*, Matab'-i Yusfi, Alwar, pp. 13-14
9. This tradition echoes Christ's advice that one should show kindness to those who live on earth, so that He who is in Heaven might show kindness to one. See Abul Kalam Azad, *Tarjuman al-Qur'an*, vol. I., 101
10. Al-Fath al-Rabbani (tr. Maulana 'Ashiq Ilahi), Delhi, A H 1330, p. 19  
الحقن عيال الله فاختب الحقن إلى الله من أحسن إلى عياله.
11. *Maktabat-i Quddusi*, Delhi, p. 205
12. *Sarur al-Sudur* (MS.), p. 70
13. *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad*, p. 70
14. See *Islamic Culture*, vol. iv, July 1980, p. 149.
15. *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad*, p. 4 A slave could succeed to the *sajjada* of his master, pp. 4-5

16. *Al Quran*, XLIX:13. 'Surely the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the one who is characterized by the greatest *taqwa*.'

For semantic elucidation of the word *taqwa* in the light of the Quranic *Weltanschauung*, see Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Quran*, Tokyo, 1964, p. 43 et seq.

17. *Fawaid al-Fuad*, pp.2-3.
18. Al-Biruni's *India* (tr. E.C.Sachau), London, 1910.
19. Beni Prasad. *The State in Ancient India*, p. 12.
20. *Akhbar al-Akhyar*, p. 63.
21. For an illuminating discussion of the concept of *Rububiyyat* in Islam, see Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *Tarjuman al-Quran*, vol. 1, pp.35-42. English translation by Syed Abdul Latif, vol. 1, pp. 19-44. Azad observes: 'The strangest thing about this scheme of Providence, though the most patent, is its uniformity and the harmony underlying it. The method and manner or providing means of sustenance for every object of existence are the same everywhere. A single principle is at work in all things' (p. 24).
22. *Siyar al-Auliya*, p.46.
23. *Iawa'id al-I'ud*, p 162.
24. ibid p 207 *Siyar al-Auliya*
25. *Iawa'id al-I'ud*, p 119
26. جنابت بر دو نوع است، جنابت دلست و جنابت تن، جنابت تن از سببت بازن حاصل شود،  
و جنابت دل سببت نامودار- جنابت تن پاک آب شود اما جنابت دل پاک دیده میگردد-

*Akhbar al-Akhyar*, p.64. See *Mulhamat* (p.10) where Shaikh Jamaiuddin Hansvi says:

يَا أَخْمَدُ الزَّاهِدُ يَطْهَرُ ظَاهِرَهُ بِالْمَاءِ وَالْعَارِفُ يَطْهَرُ بِاطِنَهُ مِنَ الْهَوَىٰ -

O Ahmad! A *zahid* washes his body with water; an '*arif*' cleans his inner self of all temptations

- 27 Once Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya happened to meet Sultan Mubarak Khalji and narrated the following tradition of the Prophet before him:

مَمَنْ صَاحِبٌ يَصْحِبُ صَاحِبَهُ سَاعَةً مِنْ لَيْلٍ أَوْ نَهَارٍ إِلَّا يَسْئِلُ اللَّهَ  
مَنْ صَنَجْتَهُ هَلْ أَدْيَتْ فِيهَا حَقَّ اللَّهِ أَمْ لَا ؟

'Whoever would sit in an other's company for an hour, God would ask him if he fulfilled the obligation of company.' *Durar-i Nizami* (MS.); *Siyar al-Auliya*, p. 558.

اپنے انصافات کو سنبھالیج انصافے ازان بالآخر نسبت کر کے انصافات خود مسم خود بچوں دچوں درافت  
د احوال شارشیت، خود بخود خود رام حضرت شیع زند -

*Diya Nakhshabi, Silk al-Suluk*, pp. 63,71.

28. *Anwar al-'Uyun, malfuz of Shaikh 'Abdul-Haqq of Rudauli*, p.3. See also Khwaja Muhammad Ma'sum's letter to Prince Aurangzeb wherein he tells the prince that struggle against one's own *nafs* was greater in value than *jihad* against the enemies. *Maktubat-i Ma'sumi*, pp.113-117.
29. *Durar-i Nizāmī* (MS.).
31. *Al-Fath al-Rabbani*, pp.19,27&47.
32. *Surur al-Sudur* (MS.).
33. *Fawaid al-Fuad*, p. 40.
34. *ibid.*, p.97.
35. *Surur al-Sudur* (MS.).
36. *Siraj al-Hidayah* (MS.), f 26b.
37. *Surur al-Sudur* (MS.).
38. *Siraj al-Hidayah* (MS.).
39. *ibid.*, the saint quotes *Badr al-Sa'adat* in support of his view.

”یہ بایہ حکم را کر کنہ مسٹک را بخوبی فتن آنحضرت زیادہ بآشناز سال ازقت او دوزنی عابد او گے۔“

Considered in this light 'Alauddin Khalji's regulation forcing the peasant to part with all surplus corn and sell it (Barani, p.305) was legally valid. During the time of Firuz Shah Tughluq the 'Ulama, under the pressure of vested interests, criticized even limited state involvement in the control and supply of goods, *Insha-i Mahru*, Lahore edition, pp. 68-77.

40. *Jawami 'al-Kalim*, p. 15.
41. *Ta'rikh-i Firuz Shahi*, p. 334.
42. Even the government of Iltutmish could not take action against the prostitutes (بُرَاهِنَةُ وَبُرَاهِنَاتُ). Barani, *Ta'rikh-i Firuz Shahi*, p.43. 'Ala'uddin Khalji dealt with them sternly (*Khaza'in al-Futuh*, pp.17-18), but the success of his *Ihtisab* measures was due to the moral support that came from the Sufis of the age. Barani, *Ta'rikh-i Firuz Shahi*, p. 344.
43. *Islam and Ahmadism*, Lahore, 1936, pp. 6-7.
44. *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* (Eng. tr. A.Rogers), vol. i, p. 169.
45. Kabir was a weaver, Sa'in was a barber, Ra'idas was a worker in leather, Dadu was a cotton cleaner. According to the author of *Dabistan al-Madhabib*, Dadu was a

*naddaf* (carder of cotton) but Sudhakar Dvivedi is of the opinion that he was a *tanner* or currier (*mochi*) and his family profession was that of making leather bags (*mot*) for drawing water from wells.

46. The Quran says:
  - (i) 'And your Lord says: Call upon Me, I will answer you.' (XXIV:60).
  - (ii) 'And we are nearer to it (your life vein) than you, but you do not see.' (XXVII:85). Kabir echoes Quranic ideas in many of his verses.
47. The *Guru Granth* contains 112 *shlokas* of Baba Farid. A glance at the subject-index of these *shlokas* in Dr. Harnam Singh Shan's *So Said Shaikh Farid* (Chandigarh, 1975, pp.9-15) would show how Shaikh Farid's ideas had fascinated Guru Nanak.
48. *Guru Nanak, Founder of Sikhism*, Delhi, 1969, p. 13.
49. *A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic*, London, 1947, p. 71.
50. *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, p.185.
51. According to al Qalqashandi (*An Arab Account of India in the 14th Century*, p.29), Delhi alone had two thousand *khanqahs*.
52. Barani writes about Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya:  
He had opened wide the doors of his discipleship...and admitted nobles and plebeians, rich and poor, learned and illiterate citizens and villagers, soldiers and warriors, free-men and slaves, and these people refrained from many improper things because they considered themselves disciples of the Shaikh. (*Tariikh-i Firuz Shahi*, p.343).
53. *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad*, pp. 84-85 & 245.
54. *Jawami' al-Kalim* pp. 118-119.
55. *Fuhfat al-Mujalis* (MS.), f.52 a; f. 65ab.
56. For details about his life and teachings, *Siyar al-Auliya*, pp. 156-157. *Surur al-Sudur* MS.; also Nizami. *Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 186-187.
57. Badauni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, vol.iii, pp. 5-6.
58. *Sarur al-Sudur*, (MS.).
59. *Siyar al-Auliya*, p. 183.
60. Sayyid Mohammad Gesu Daraz, *Majmu'a Yazdeh Rasa'il*, edited by S. 'Ata Husain, Hyderabad, A.H 1360, pp. 131-133; Shah Kalimullah, *Kashkol-i Kalimi*, Delhi, A.H. 1308, p.25; Shaikh Muhammad Chishti, *Majalis-i Hasaniya* (MS.), Muslim University Library.
61. *Fath al-Rahman*, p. 1.
62. *Kashkol*, p. 30.
63. *Fakhr al-Talibin*, p. 46.

64. *Malfuzat-i Shah 'Abd al-Aziz*, p. 44.

65. *Siyar al-Auliya*, p. 512.

66. *Jawami' al-Kalim*, pp. 172-173.

67. *Asrar al-Makhdumin*, Fathpur, Hasva, A.D.1893, p.16. One day some musicians from Delhi visited him. He took them to Shaikh Diya'uddin for an audition party. The musicians started reciting verses in Persian. The saint remarked:

اُن تکیت بگزارید و پیزے در مندوی بگنیہ کر بنیم ہام است۔

68. *Tuhfat al-Majalis* (MS.), India Office Library, D.P. 977, f. 64b.

شیخ دار اور نظم نارسی در گجری نیگلی رسانیت است۔

69. *Jawami' al-Kalim*, pp. 172-173.

70. *Sarur al-Sudur* (MS.).

71. ibid.

72. *Anwar al-'Uyun*, p. 7.

73. ibid. p. 10.

74. *Jawami' al-Kalim*, p. 59.

75. *Sarur al-Sudur* (MS.).

شیخ دار اعجج تعالیٰ ہر سر زبان روزی کر دو جو، ہم مولیٰ، ہم نارسی، ہم مندوی۔

He quotes his Hindi verse also.

76. His nom de plume in Hindi was Rajan. The author of *Subh-i Gulshan* writes about him:

در کتب علمی مندوان نہارتے کامل داشت (من ۲۱۲)

77. *Maktabat-i Shah Muhibullah* (MS.) Muslim University Library, pp. 133-134.

78. *Kalimat-i Tayyibat*, pp. 37-40.

79. Trilochan Singh, *Guru Nanak*, p. 111.

80. *A'in-i Akbari*, vol.ii, p. 17.

81. *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 302.

82. For the imperial slave household of the Delhi, see Nizami, *Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*.

83. For slave-girls (*kanizan*) who prepared food in the *Khanqah* of Shaikh Bahauddin Zakarya, *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad*, p. 149.

- Shaikh Nizamuddin's mother had a slave girl, *Fawā'id al-Fu'ad*
- 84 *Akhbar al Akhyar*, p 74
- 85 *Fawā'id al Fu'ad* pp 188-189
- 86 *ibid* p 4
- 87 *ibid* p 111
- 88 *ibid* p 112
- 89 An Interpretation of Islamic History, *Journal of World History* vol 1, no 1, p 59



# Influence of Sufism on Literature and Art

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Mahmoud Boroujerdi

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'In the Name of God'

**I**T is the wearing of woollen garbs, but also a sign of asceticism and self-abnegation. It is the purification of the heart from the love of the world. It is to adorn one's outward form with righteous deeds and good beliefs.

It is reported of Imam Ali that he said,

The word *Tasawwif* is derived from *Suf*, and this word is composed of three letters sad, waw and fa. *Sad* is a reference to *sehat* (health), *safa* (purity) and *sawm* (fasting). *Waw* is a reference to *wudd* (friendship), *wird* (litany) and *wafa* (loyalty). Fa is an allusion to *faqr* (poverty) *fikr* (meditation) and *fana* (annihilation).

IBN Arabi defines Sufism as the true knowledge of the Divine Law (shariah) both in its external and internal aspects. According to Safi Ali Shah, a well-known Sufi of the last century, Sufism is the journey through the stations of the soul. According to Baba Tahir,

Sufism is life without death and death without life. It is to be resuscitated in divine life and to kill one's psychic and carnal self. Sufism consists in grasping the truth in its totality and expressing subtleties of the path. It is good morals and taking rest in God. It is invocation of the Name of God in the state of ecstasy. It is to be with God and to lose interest in everything other than God. It is the trust of God given to man. It is annihilation and purification of one's secrets. It is action in accordance with Divine satisfaction. It is an upward journey toward God; it is guidance of mankind; it is the endurance of calamities; it is the abandonment of desires; it is good manners and good demeanour; it is a light from God. Sufism is based upon eight qualities; generosity, contentment, patience, allusiveness (*isharat*), estrangement (*ghurbah*), wearing woollen cloth (*suf*), wandering and poverty. Sufism, moreover, has ten pillars as follows: the purification of unity (*tajrid-i-tawhid*); understanding; the spiritual dance (*sama*); good companionship; charity; abandonment of choice; the aptitude for ecstasy; unveiling the incoming inspirations (*khawatur*); frequent travelling; the abandonment of means and prohibiting any kind of savings.

#### A true Sufi has four signs:

- (1) He is purified of all darkness and he is in constant meditation.
- (2) He is cut off from all creatures and is joined to his Creator.
- (3) He has cast off the habits of nature and has gained the companionship of the angels.
- (4) He has abandoned carnal desires.

A Sufi is he who has annihilated his self and is sustained by God. He has liberated himself from the hold of nature and has joined the source of all reality. The people of perfection are called Sufis and those wayfarers on the path are called *Mutassawif* whose soul is purified of every darkness. The Persian Sufi poet has beautifully expressed this in the following verse:

He who is not able to challenge the chalice of  
wine and the goblet.

The mirror of his nature will not be illuminated.

If you want to be polished like a mirror.

Nobody should be discontented with you.

A true Sufi does not see, both here and hereafter, anything save God. One should give up what one possesses and one should not shrink from what happens to him.

**WHAT is the manner of Sufism?**

It is nothingness until you withstand your existence.

**ANOTHER Persian poet exclaims:**

The treaders of the path do not shun away from  
afflictions. Those who have taken the hand of  
discipleship,

Shall not evade the cruelties of the beloved.

If those who seek to take the hand of the beloved,  
Take away their hands, with whom shall they  
entangle it?

So a true mystic is he who has annihilated himself from his illusory existence and has attained the vision of the essence, the Attributes and the Name of God, through contemplation.

O My heart leave aside the path of the people of the  
Form.

Be as a mirror and leave aside every impurity and  
filth

If you seek the pure light of the true gnostics leave  
aside,

Of necessity whatever does not belong to you.

## Poetry

POETRY was one of the instruments chosen by Sufi authors to express their spiritual doctrines. One of the first pioneers of Sufism,

who chose poetry for this purpose, was Abu Sa'id Abul-Khayr. The Sufi literature of Iran had its cradle in Khurasan. Ibrahim Adham, the famous Sufi, originally came from the province of Khurasan. Abu Sa'id, promulgated a sort of living, and not merely a theoretical Sufism. He is the first Sufi who used quatrains to express sublime religious themes and made the quatrains a means for conveying spiritual and religious truth, even if he did not believe himself to be a poet.

When you become dust,  
I become dust of your dust.  
And when I become dust of your dust,  
I am made pure.

AMONG the poems used by Abu Sa'id Abul-Khayr, there are some *ghazals* too. All his poems are touched with simplicity and his style is very close to the understanding of the common people. Even if certain elite and opulent men attended his sessions, most of his audience consisted of the illiterate and common people and Shaikh Abu Sa'id had to make his utterances comprehensible for them. Hence originated the simplicity of style, lack of artificiality and even vulgarity and the use of simple metres and rhymes in poetry. Sufi *ghazal* in the later period preserved these characteristics.

I am your drunkard, I am free from the wine and  
chalice  
I am your game, I am tree from the lasso and the bait  
You were my real intention; from the Kaaba and the  
idol house  
I am free from both these stations.

ABU-QASIM Abdul Karim Qushayri (375-465 H) called the Imam of Sufis in Nayshapur, taught a kind of moderate Sufism which was in harmony with shari'ah and far from vainglorious claims of some Sufi masters. If Imam Qushayriyyah, contrary to Bayazid of Bistam and the Shaikh of Kharagan and Abu Sa'id, compiled several works, it was not solely due to the fact that his spiritual lineage went back to Junayd. It was more due to the fact that he was a disciple of two

famous Sufi authors, i.e. Abu Ali Daqqaq and Abu Abdur-Rahman Sulami, who, at the same time, emphasized attachment to the external form of shari'ah. His main works include *Al-Risalah-Al-Qushayriyyah* and *Tartib-as-Suluk*, explaining the preliminaries of initiation and invocation.

AMONG the masters of Khurasan, one can mention Abu Abdul Rahman Sulami (325-412 H) to whom are attributed near thirty volumes of Sufi Works, among which one can mention *Tabaqat-as-Sufiyyah* (the generations of Sufis), *Tarikh-as-Sufiyyah* (The history of Sufism), *Haqa'iq at-Tafsir*, also called *Tafsiru Ahl-i-l-Haqa'iq* (Commentary for the people of realization), *Kitab-al-Futuwwah* (The book of chivalry). His book *Tabaqat as-Sufiyyah* includes the biographies of five generations of Sufis together with their spiritual doctrines and utterances. Among other famous Sufi authors one can mention Abul-Hasan 'Ali-Ibn-i-Uthman-ibn-i Ali-Al Ghaznavi-al-Hujweri, the writer of *Kashf-al-Mahyub* (the unveiling of the veiled), whose tomb in Lahore is the visiting place of the common believers.

To go back for a while to Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, this master from Herat, who was two years younger than Nasir-i-Khosrow showed so much zeal towards Hanbalite theology, which was no less than the enthusiasm and the zeal of Nasir-i-Khosrow towards his chosen creed. Abdullah, first learned Quran and Hadith from his father, and his next teacher in Hadith was Qadi Abu Manzur-i-Azdi, who was hostile to theologians and Mutazilites. The treatises which best represent his particular attitude towards theological problems are *Kitab-al-Arba'in Fis-as-Sifat*, and the treatise, *Dimm-al-Kalam* (refutation of *Kalam*) and also the treatise *Iljam-al-Awam* (haltering the common People). His best work in Sufism is *Manazil-as-Sa'irin* (the stations of the path) in which he elaborates in detail the hundred stations which must be traversed by the Sufi in the spiritual path. But, the Shaikh is more renowned for his book of supplications in rhymed prose, written in beautiful Persian. Among other works attributed to him one can mention *Kanz-as-Salikin* (the treasury of the adepts), *Qalandar Nameh*

(the book of itinerant Sufis), *Mohabbat-Nameh* (the book of love), whose style is different from *Tabaqat-as-Sufiyyah*.

THE best period for the cultivation of science, especially the science of Sufism was the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries of Hegira calender. As the result of the Sufi doctrine, the spiritual horizon of both the common people and the scientists broadened to a large extent. Sufism incited in people the spirit of action and self exertion. In this school the elder masters taught the novices the lessons of martyrdom in the holy war and the defence of their religion and faith.

The holy warrior is struggling in the way of  
martyrdom.

But he does not know that the martyr of love is far  
superior to him.

How can in the way of God, this be like that?

Because one is martyred by the enemy and one by the  
beloved.

THE Sufi themes in Persian poetry, caused a major transformation in both the form and the style of expression. Until the Timurids, the moulding of Sufi themes in Persian poetry was constantly in progress and the employment of the verse form to express the Sufi doctrine is very conspicuous.

WE said that Sufism brought about a kind of spiritual transformation among people. One such instance was Ghazali who after experiencing inner upheavals, was able, by purification and spiritual exertion, to turn them to the best advantage. Ghazali, unlike Descartes, did not say, 'I think, therefore I am.' Rather he said: 'I undergo a spiritual experience; I taste from the true gnosis; I will, therefore, I am; the God who appears to me in my ecstatic visions—exists and is real. Our true being is that which we are conscious of, and about which we are well informed.' Ghazali maintains that a Sufism which is *not* based on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the chosen one (Mohammad S.A.), is fickle and untrustworthy. He says that the principles of Tasawwuf are: to eat the lawful food, and to take the Prophet of God as an example in his moral qualities, virtues, deeds

and commands. Needless to say, Ghazali had a tremendous influence on nearly all religious issues which had reached a high peak of development in his time. He even ventured in the domain of philosophy not to support but to refute it.

GHAZALI's attack against philosophers had a far-reaching effect. His book *Maqasid al-Filasifah* (the intention of philosophers) makes one think that he is one of the philosophers, but, in fact, he compiled this work to show his intimate knowledge of philosophy, only to refute it in *Tahafut al-Filasafah* but finally, he was merged in Sufism. He says, 'Know that, that which journeys towards God and strives to attain His proximity, is the heart of man and not his body. Of course, I do not mean by the heart that fleshy acorn-like member, but what I call heart is one of the secrets of God the Almighty which is not perceived by the senses.'

ELUCIDATION of Sufi teachings in poetry, is most evident in the poems of Sana'i of Ghazna. First, in his prime of life, he had eulogized the oppressive rulers, but he suddenly brushed them aside and came to appreciate the oppressed common people.

How often the crown and the throne of the dammed  
rulers  
Was broken to pieces because of the adverse pray-  
of the oppressed  
How often the banner of the victorious emperors  
Was overthrown due to the sighs of the widows  
Know with certainty that the deep sighs of the  
oppressed at midnight  
Are worse than the arrow, the spearhead and the  
Javelin.  
What old senile women are able to accomplish at  
midnight,  
Cannot be done in a year.  
By many Khosroes like you.

THE influence of Sana'i in the development of this genre of poetry, is well represented in his famous *Hadiqatal Haqiqat* (The

Garden of Truth) and also in his *Sayr-al-Ibad ila-al-Ma'ad* (The journey of Men to the After-life). The latter work is a good representation of Sufi poetry and is considered to be one of the oldest Persian masterpieces of poetry and had some influence on the Divine comedy of Dante, some one and a half century later. The didactic poetry of Sufism, before reaching full maturity in Rumi, was perfected by Attar who was an immediate predecessors of Rumi, a perfection which was not found even in Sana'i.

ATTAR, the Sufi from Nayshapur, was able to open new horizons in poetry not only in Sufi literature, but for the whole of Persian literature. Persian poetry, which followed the personal tastes of the courtiers and depicted only the king and his entourage, for the first time turned to depict the conditions of the lower strata of society. It found a good expression in Sufi literature including the works of Attar. The rich literary heritage bequeathed by Attar, other than his biography of saints, *Tadhkirat-al-Awliya*, which is about the life and the sayings of well-known Sufis, includes a series of poetic works such as *Asrar-Namah* (The Book of Secrets), *Musibat Nameh* (The Book of Affliction), *Ilahi Nameh* (The Book of Divine Mysteries), *Mantiq at-tayr* (The Speech of Birds) which rank among the best Persian poetry. The main difference between Sana'i and Attar is in the use of stories and narrative, which is a more conspicuous feature of Attar. What we gather from the poetry of Attar is that he had a deep faith in the teachings of Hallaj. *Tadhkirat-al-awliya* is his simple prose work in Persian which represents the acme of Persian Sufi prose in the seventh century.

AFTER Attar, Sufi poetry reached another unknown peak which was conquered by Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi, known as Maulana (Rumi). His Sufism is one of love and knowledge. His great *Mathnawi* is the epitome of all Sufi experience and truth achieved in the Islamic world. Like other Sufi didactic poetry this master-piece was composed in Bahri Ramal-i-Mussaddas, a meter in which the famous poet Rudaki had versified the *Kalilah wa Dimnah* and Attar had composed

his *Mantiq at-Tayr*. Maulana (a name by which Rumi is known in Persia), in his didactic poetry makes use of rich symbolism. He considers shariah as a candle in the path (*tariqah*) by which *Haqiqat* (truth) is attained. The attainment of knowledge is only possible by the light of faith and when the heart is kindled by such light, it will mirror all divine realities. One should abandon the world, because the world is all that separates man from God and from self-perfection.

This world is like a prison and we are prisoners.  
 Make a hole in this prison and make yourself free.  
 What is the world? To be neglectful of God  
 It is not commodities, silver, children or wife.  
 When you are a burden-beast of your wealth for the  
 sake of religion,  
 People had asked, 'What good is wealth?'  
 When he banishes wealth and kingdom from his heart  
 Like Solomon he will consider himself a mendicant  
 beggar.

MAULANA, not only shows originality in certain problems, one can say that there is scarcely a problem which he does not tackle. Only his difficult style is sometimes an obstacle for understanding his ideas. The collection of his *ghazals* in addition to having rich content, is a product of effervescence, ecstasy and lyrical enthusiasm; and since lyric poetry is better able to express Sufi sentiments than prose works, the *Divan-i-Shams* better reflects the mind of Maulana. His talks about man's union with God, looks dubious at first, but, later, we come to realize that there is the possibility of such union through which a mystic obtains his true identity. He says:

I am both the parting of the hair and the good luck  
 I am both the king and the throne  
 I am both affliction and felicity  
 I am both the pain and the drug  
 I am both blood and milk  
 I am both young and old  
 I am both slave and lord  
 I am both this and that

I am both Shams, the sugar-maker and the dominion  
of Tabriz  
I am both cup-bearer and drunkard.  
I am both renowned and anonymous.

We should say that knowledge and love are divine and cannot be merely gained through sheer self-exertion, unless God wills them. Maulana says that human love is no more than the reflection of divine love. Love is an astrolabe for the divine mysteries. Faith does not depend on reason, but deep faith is inspired by true love.

The sickness of love is different from all ailments  
Love is the astrolabe for Divine secrets.  
Love, whether it is from this side or from that side,  
It will finally lead us to the King.

WHEN we speak about the development of Sufism in Iran, we cannot do without a reference to Saadi and his poetry. Saadi, as we can gather from what the author of *Shadd-al-azar* has said about him, and from what we can gather from his poems, made frequent journeys to different Islamic regions, sat down with the Sufis of Iraq and Syria and studied extensively Sufi books. This has inspired him to follow the Sufi path. In his *Bustan* (Garden) and *Gulistan* (Rose-garden) he has devoted several chapters to the manners and life style of the Sufis, and, moreover, he tells interesting stories about Sufis elsewhere. Nonetheless, Saadi, sometimes casts doubts on the sincerity and the veracity of Sufi masters. But, in his prose works one can see the essence of Sufi teachings. In the five spiritual sessions, (*Majalis*) of Saadi, one can see every now and then Sufi teachings. For example, in the third session, when he is talking about love and the knowledge of God, his style is very close to that of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari. One of the strong elements is the doctrine of the Unity of Existence (*Wahdat-ul-Wujud*). Saadi sees divine reality permeating everything. He considers everything other than God as non-existent. He does not see anything except God.

Man reaches a stage where he sees nothing other than  
God.

Look how limitless is the status of man.  
 I am joyous in this world because the world takes joy  
     in Him.  
 I love all the world because the world comes from  
     Him.

BUT the love of the accomplished Sufis is higher than the love expressed by Saadi in his poems, because there is a difference between a beloved whom the world comes from and a beloved who is the world. *Saadi* does not have the enthusiasm of such masters as Ruzbihan concerning love. He prefers love to reason, without doubt. But, at the same time, he finds the path of salvation passing through piety and asceticism which combines divine law with wisdom and love. *Saadi* does not reject the beauty of forms, and, as they say in Persian, the world of colours and odours (*alam-rang wa boo*). He is like a nightingale chanting on the branches of love with enthusiasm. The words of *Saadi* are a combination of science, wisdom, love, sentiment and refined sensations. On the one hand we see in him hair-splitting casuistry and the other hand, in the full sense of the word, he is filled with love and enthusiasm.

IN Hafiz this love and enthusiasm is more sublimated and refined and it transcends even the plane of wisdom, even if we do not find in the poems of *Khwaja* (Hafiz) a trace of discipleship to a particular *Shaikh*, but the abandonment of the world, constant attention to God; the search for the real beloved is the object of his ideas.

Do not be ostentatious to me, O You!  
 The leader of pilgrims (to Mecca),  
 Because you only see the house and I  
 Do not see the house but God.  
 My aim at the mosque and the tavern  
 Is your union  
 I have no thought but this  
 And God is my witness.

HAFIZ sees knowledge of the self as the path to the knowledge of God, as is testified by the Hadith, 'He who knows his self, verily

he knows his Lord ' He gets assimilated in God in order to achieve eternal life in Him

In the tavern of the Magi  
 I see the light of God  
 See what a wonder  
 From where do I see such a light?  
 There is no veil of separation  
 Between the lover and the beloved  
 O Hafiz! You are your own veil  
 Remove yourself from the midst

PERHAPS more than any other Persian poet, Hafiz has ascended the highest peak of human speech. He finds man imprisoned in the jail of the body and considers the body as the biggest veil between man and God. According to him, all the endeavours of the Sufi should be to liberate the celestial substance of the soul from the jail of the body. At the same time, this body can unite him to the absolute reality. One cannot abandon altogether one's body. One only has to make it pure and spiritual, so that it serves as an aid of the spirit and not as a hindrance on its way.

O You who by your lecturing and speech  
 Claim to be a Sufi  
 We have nothing to say to you  
 Farewell and adieu

Hafiz has a grieved heart, he is a lover of God and he wants to reach the Beloved at any cost and with every device

If the Master of the Magi became our spiritual  
 guide  
 What difference does it make?  
 There is no head (sar) in which  
 Is no secret (sirr) of God

By Master of Magi, Hafiz means the Perfect Man, while in other places, he is a 'wine-monger' or a 'cup-bearer'. Hafiz wants to make us understand that if we want to reach God, no matter to what we attach ourselves *truly*, we will have realised our aim. Hafiz does not

consider death to be absolute perdition. Death to him is a gradual transition from one stage to another stage, from one station to another station, and still higher.

Blessed be that day when I depart from this ruined  
house  
When I seek consolation and comfort of the heart  
When I go after the beloved.

If poetry is that which Aristotle has described, we should say that the real poets are the Sufi poets. A Sufi not only experiences the feeling of pleasure and pain, but he is also able to convey it to others. In fact, the beautiful and melodious language of Sufism has been one of the causes of its promulgation and dissemination everywhere. It has guided mankind to spiritual initiation and attainment to true 'gnosis' and knowledge.

If we were to mention all the Sufi poets and prose writers, it would not be feasible in this short space and time. More familiar acquaintance with Sufi and especially Persian literature would better enable us to understand their position and ideas.

### **Spiritual Dance (Sama)**

In the corner of my brain do not seek a place for  
admonition because this corner is replete with the  
whispers of the lyre and the *rubab*

SAMA is one of the special aspects of Persian Sufism, which is a kind of ecstasy, spiritual exhilaration, striking the feet and the joyous uplifting of the hands. Some Sufis say that spiritual dance (*sama*) is the food for the spirit and remembrance (*dhikr*) is the nourishment of the heart. Some others say that the spiritual dance so much absorbs the Sufi that, he neglects all the intermediary causes and does not see anything except God. The reality of *sama* is the awakening of the spirit and its constant attention toward God. We are

enraptured by music because the soul of man, before its descent into this world has been hearing the celestial music of the heavenly spheres. For this reason, Sufis not only did not prohibit spiritual music and dance, but they deemed it necessary for moral rectification and liberation from material impurity. According to them in the spiritual *sama*, man becomes free from the attachments of matter and body. Thanks to the liberation of the soul and the attainment of union with God they start to dance, in remembrance of God. Remembrance and *sama* have been prevalent almost in all Sufi orders of Iran. Sufi Shaikhs have composed beautiful pieces of poetry concerning *sama*. They used to compose and recite their *ghazals* and quatrains at *sama* sessions. The calumniators of Abu Said, reprimanded him for *sama*.

SHAIKH Shahabuddin Suhrawardi has devoted the twenty-fifth chapter of his *Awarif-al-Maarif* to the manners of the spiritual dance. In this chapter he says that Sufism is founded upon truthfulness, the purity of intention, praiseworthy manners and dignity; and whatever is in it, should be taken seriously and not in vain. Among the conditions for attending the sessions of the spiritual dance, are the purity of intention, truthfulness, dignity and shunning vainglorious jest and carnal passions. Sufis consider the melodious chant and the harmonious and beautiful song as a herald from the invisible world.

The whining of the pipe and the concussion of the  
drum  
Have a slight resemblance to that universal blow.  
Therefore sages have said that these melodies  
We have taken from the revolutions of spheres.  
It is the resonance of the spheric revolutions  
That man produces in imitation by Tanbur and vocal  
chords.  
Believers say that the bounties of paradise,  
Have made sweet every ugly voice.  
Therefore the nourishment of lovers is spiritual dance.  
Because in it there is the desire for union.

SUFIS considered *sama* to be the comfort for the lover of God and a food for his soul and a remedy for his ailments. The words and ideas

of Sufis have had a tremendous influence on Persian music in various ways. The opening lines of *Mathnawi* are a good demonstration of Maulana's extreme enthusiasm for music and *sama*.

Listen to the reed how it tells its story  
And how it complains of the woes of separation  
It is the fire of love that is blown into the reed  
It is the effervescence of love which is fermented in  
wine

Imam Mohammad Ghazali says in his *Ihya al Ulum ad Din* (Revivification of Religious Science) 'Sama is a true touchstone for the heart and a living criterion. The breeze of *sama* does not touch a heart except that it puts in motion whatever predominates it.'

We shall end our discussion with the beautiful words of *Maulana*, the famous Sufi poet of the seventh century who himself has established a special method of *sama* in his order.

*Sama* is the comfort of the living spirits  
Only he who has the spirit of the spirit in him knows  
this  
Only that person wants to get awakened  
Who is sleep in the beautiful garden  
But as to him who is sleeping in the prison  
He would be at a loss to wake up  
Make a spiritual dance only where there is wedding  
Not where there is woe sorrow and bemoaning  
He who has not seen his spiritual substance  
He from whom the shining moon is hidden  
How would such a person merit the audition of *sama*?  
Because *sama* is only for the union of the Beloved  
Those who have their faces oriented towards Kaaba  
That is their *sama* in this world and the next  
Specially a circle of Sufis who are in *Sama*  
They revolve in a circle while the Kaaba  
Is in their very midst



# The Sufi and the Poet The Dialectic of Divinity and Humanity

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Attar Singh

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**S**HAIKH Baba Farid was a man of God, who through his dedicated life and inspired works, sought to realise the vision of the universal man. He is among the major figures of the medieval Indian renaissance whose moral and spiritual insights are relevant even today after a lapse of eight centuries. Any proper appraisal of his contribution and achievements as also his significance to the cultural history of India, whether as a mystic divine, a scholar, or as a poet, demands a broad scale of intellectual sympathy which is rarely applied when tackling any meaningful aspect of Indian Islam.

SHAIKH Farid was one of the pioneer Sufi saints of medieval Punjab. His mystical career and spiritual ministry of the Chishti order covered distant areas, now spread over Pakistan, Indian Punjab, Haryana and Delhi. Places like Khotwal, Delhi, Hansi, Faridkot and Pakpattan are hallowed alike by his sacred memory. A graph of the activities of the successors and disciples of Shaikh Farid would indicate further extension of the sacred geography of Islam in India into Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and even Gujarat.

APART from his mystical and religious eminence, Shaikh Farid also enjoyed the distinction of being the progenitor of Punjabi literary tradition. These two facets have attracted a great deal of scholarly and critical attention. But a curious feature of studies on Shaikh Farid, so far, has been that both these aspects were dealt with in isolation of each other; an integrated account of his life and work has yet to emerge. Except for some old Persian hagiographies of Baba Farid which occasionally quote a Punjabi couplet attributed to the master and references in Muslim Punjabi poetry, of Shaikh Farid as the pioneer Punjabi Sufi poet, recent works dealing with his mystic career usually ignore his contribution to Punjabi literature. *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj-e-Shakar* by Professor K.A Nizami, the first ever definitive biography, takes up the issue of the Punjabi hymns included in the *Guru Granth* (the Holy Book of Sikhs compiled by Guru Arjan Dev in AD 1604) in an appendix, and summarily dismisses them as, 'Not the actual compositions of the great saint.' Similarly the Pakistani Sufi theologian Wahid Ahmed Musud in his *Sawaneh-i-Hazrat Baba Farid-ud-Din Ganj-e-Shakar*, avers that, 'Like other heads of the Chishti order, Baba Farid was not a poet.'

FOR the student of Punjabi literature, however, the main relevance of Shaikh Farid has been a poet who gathered different strands of the national literature of Punjabi people and their highly evocative hymns and *shlokas* into a unique literary and cultural tradition. Canonization by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, of the Punjabi verses of Shaikh Baba Farid, by including them in the corpus of the sacred Sikh texts, is a fact central to any consideration of their significance to the literary history of the Punjab. Despite lingering doubts in some quarters, Punjabi literary circles, not only in India, but even in Pakistan, have conceded that the verses included in *Guru Granth Sahib* are the creation of none other than Shaikh Farid-ud-Din Masud Ganj-e-Shakar. Dr. Faqir Mohammad Faqir in his chapter entitled 'Punjabi adab ki khusoosiat' (the characteristics of Punjabi literature) in *Tarikh-i-Adabiat: Musliman-i-Pakistan wa Hind*, has

categorically accepted the theory that the works attributed to Baba Farid in the *Guru Granth* are his own creation and not of Shaikh Ibrahim.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Kaifi Jampuri in his learned work *Saraiki Shairi* also supports the theory that these verses are the writing of Hazrat Baba Farid-ud-Din Ganj-e-Shakar.<sup>2</sup>

FURTHERMORE, recent research has also helped push back the date of the earliest historical references to the fact that Shaikh Farid used to compose verses in Punjabi. Malik Mohammad Jayasi in his Persian work *Fazil Sharif Akhrawat*, while alluding to the contribution of Sufi saints to the Indian languages, states that, 'Khwaja Shakar Ganj also composed some verses in Hindi and Punjabi.' The date of the composition of this work has been determined by Dr. Harkirat Singh around AD 1540, 64 years before the compilation of the *Guru Granth*.<sup>3</sup> Similarly Shaikh Bajan, a 14th century Sufi Saint in his book *Khazana-i-Rahimat* has attributed a couple of Punjabi verses to Shaikh Baba Farid.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Mehr Abdul Haq not only accepts Shaikh Baba Farid as one of the earliest poets of the Multani language, but has also given some more of his Punjabi couplets on the basis of a manuscript of his 'sayings' entitled *Gulzar-i-Faridi*, compiled comparatively recently.<sup>5</sup>

THE very presence of the apocryphal Punjabi writings outside the *Guru Granth*, attributed to Shaikh Baba Farid, testifies to the wide acceptance which both the legend of the saint and his Punjabi composition found among the people of Punjab. Dr. Mohan Singh Diwana in his *History of Punjabi Literature*, Dr. K.A. Nizami in *The life and Time of Shaikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj-e-Shakar*, Professor Pritam Singh in the monograph, 'Shaikh Farid', included in Volume I of *The History of Punjabi Literature*, and Piara Singh Padam in his article, 'Birton Bahrli Farid Rachna', included in the Punjabi section of *Baba Farid: Life and Teachings* (brought out by Baba Farid Memorial Society to mark the octocentennial birth Anniversary of Shaikh Farid in 1973) have given samples of such compositions. Additions have been made by Pakistani historians of Punjabi and Saraiki literatures, reference to whom has already been made. Culled from various

source books on Shaikh Farid, these writings constitute a sizeable mass of material which has to be further explored and critically examined. Suffice to say here that their availability from diverse sources is by itself a proof of their great cultural import.

SINCE Punjabi literary studies in India are an outgrowth of Sikh studies, and because of the canonization of the compositions of Shaikh Farid as sacred Sikh hymnody, the major concern of the literary scholar in this field has been more theological than literary. The fact of the matter is that where the literary scholar broke free from the unending, and, to a large extent, pointless controversy about the authorship of *Farid Bani*, he was drawn in by the problem of correlating Shaikh Farid's teachings to those of the Sikh Gurus. Shaikh Farid's status and achievement as a Muslim mystic was only of peripheral interest to the students of his Punjabi compositions, just as the students of his Sufi ministry were diffident in accepting the fact of his being a Punjabi poet. It is a happy augury indeed that in recent years Pakistani scholars of Punjabi literature, breaking loose from sectarian concerns, have started responding to the literary contribution of Shaikh Farid along with that of other Punjabi Sufi poets. Given the total context of Sikh theology within which the Punjabi scholar approached the works of Shaikh Farid, it should not be difficult to imagine why other Punjabi compositions attributed to Shaikh Farid (but not incorporated in the *Guru Granth*) should have been treated more or less as apocryphal writings and then denied any further consideration. Another curious feature of the Punjabi literary studies in tackling the literary contribution of Shaikh Farid has been almost total indifference to his works in other languages, particularly, Persian and Arabic. The conclusion therefore, is that for all practical purposes the two streams of enquiry into the heritage of Shaikh Farid have remained insular.

WITHOUT detracting from the validity of the theological approach to this unique phenomenon of religious history of India, i.e. canonization by Guru Arjan Dev of Shaikh Farid's verses, it may be

submitted that they are of great literary consequence. By admitting these verses into the *Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan Dev no doubt added a new dimension, and lent to them an aspect of universality by juxtaposing them with religious writings drawn from other traditions and streams. The Guru did not merely add these works to the compendium of Sikh sacred texts, he also noted his own 'editorial comments' on the teachings of Shaikh Farid whenever he felt so inclined, apart from including other reactions and responses by way of explications by Guru Nanak and Guru Amar Dass. Going beyond their immediate purpose of restoring social sanctity to the views of Shaikh Farid where they touch borders of nihilism and total denial of life here and now, these explications and comments vouchsafe the great importance which the Sikh Gurus attached to the teachings of Shaikh Farid.<sup>6</sup> They further embody the literary dialogue which the Sikh Gurus sought to promote between the two identical but otherwise mutually exclusive streams of Punjabi religious poetry: the Sikh-Indian stream starting with Guru Nanak and the Muslim stream of which Shaikh Farid was both progenitor and symbol.

PARTNERTHEITICALLY, one may say that the comparative study of the medieval Sufi, Sikh and Bhakti poetry, irrefutably establishes the fact that sensitive minds in all the three streams were not only moved by an identical sense of the human crisis of their times, but also shared a remarkable identity of approach to the crisis. In their essential motivation for the enlargement of the realm of human awareness and freedom (in an otherwise closed society), all these mystic poets struggled against the deadening enslavement to orthodoxies of their respective religious traditions. The element of socio-religious revolt in the compositions of the poets of Sikh and Bhakti movement have been carefully identified, properly documented and elaborately analysed. But Sufi poetry in Indian languages, more particularly in Punjabi and Sindhi, has not received the same attention. This has been caused by the pronounced tendency in India and Pakistan to approach the phenomenon of Islam in India only in the context of a confrontation whether resolved or otherwise. Such an approach demands

treatment of Indian Islam as a monolith and not as a dynamic and organic reality, subject, in itself, to inner tensions and contradictions. Visualised mainly as a big contradiction in the Indian milieu, Indian Islam withheld its internal dialectical struggles and conflicts, schisms and divisions, and their correlation with the Indian reality from being probed and charted.

THERE is no disputing the lucid observation of Professor Mohammad Habib that, 'The ideological history of Islam, including Islam in India, will never be scientifically apprehended unless it is clearly borne in mind that Muslim progress in almost every sphere of thought had reached its culmination by the first quarter of the 13th century. Thereafter within the socially prescribed limitations to thought and culture (limitations insisted upon the dogmatic theology which was victorious over all rivals), no further progress was possible.'<sup>7</sup> One may also accept his further assertion, 'India has added nothing to mystic thought, for no substantial addition to it was really possible.'<sup>8</sup> But it will be a serious mistake to deny all relevance to the Indian Sufis and to ignore either the element of socio-religious dissent which they voiced not only against empty formalism of orthodox Islam but even against the concept of finality of Revelation which was germane to the orthodox faith, or their stupendous contribution to evolution of northern Indian literatures.

A more interesting feature of the course of Indian Sufism is its success in localisation of the sacred geography of Islam, even by challenging some of the basic pillars of Islamic faith such as Haj, and by adopting native languages for religious communication and mystical expression. A comprehensive analysis and proper documentation of the Sufi texts in Indian languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Urdu, Hindi and Bengali will reveal the wide range of the efforts made both at the ideological and the practical levels for coming to terms with the reality of India and for promoting inter-religious tolerance and understanding. As a matter of fact, the most striking feature of the Sufi Punjabi poetry, more particularly of Shaikh Baba

Farid, is the inner joy of discovering a land of vast pastures, thick forests, long winding rivers (in varying moods), of ferries and boats. The pervasive ambience is of a land of a thousand images all sharply etched in joyous abandon. The poet comes into intimate contact with this newly discovered reality in the mode of a lover and not of Babar the conqueror. Such a sublime expression of the indigenisation of the spirit of Islam is very rarely encountered elsewhere.

IT is a pity that the history of Islam in India is based only upon the political facts and Persian records. Here, too, one finds that the ideological overtones of the political conflicts are either ignored or relegated to minor importance. The distortions inherent in understanding the role of Islam by shutting out the evidence from the mystical Muslim literature in Indian languages, in general, and from Punjabi and Sindhi lore, in particular, are further heightened by a refusal to perceive the ideological background of the conflicts of wills and personalities which characterised the political scene in Muslim India. How else does one explain the tragic fate of the great liberal Prince, poet and scholar, Dara Shikoh? A disciple of Hazrat Mian Mir of the Qadiriya order, Dara, because of his involvement with the mystical movement for 'unification of Hindu and Muslim thought', fell a victim as much to the wily intrigues of his younger brother Aurangzeb, as to the orthodox reaction spearheaded by the revivalist Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, the leader of Naqshbandi order. It will be worthwhile to remember the legendary friendship between Hazrat Mian Mir and Sikh Guru Arjan Dev, who suffered the wrath of Jehangir, actively motivated by the increasing influence of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi at the royal court. The Shaikh was in favour of stamping out religious pluralism. No wonder that the Sufis shared with the Sikh Gurus the honour of being persecuted by the powers of their times. Even though, unlike Dara, Sarmad, one of the most illustrious Sufi poets of Mughal India, did not stake any claims to the throne, but he also became a martyr for his faith and his mystic integrity.

A minor but significant detail of the evolution of Punjabi Sufi poetry is that as the issues pertaining to the relegation of non-Muslims to the status of second rate citizens (as part of the state policy) got pushed to the forefront at the behest apparently of Naqhshbandis, Punjabi Sufi poets started reacting sharply against any distinctions based upon religion and creed. Emphasizing equality of Hindus and Muslims and refuting the concept of *kufir* so far as it applied to dealing with peoples of other faiths, became a recurrent theme of the Sufi poets in the Punjab. Prominent among these are Sultan Bahu (AD 1629-1691), Bulhe Shah (AD 1680-1757) and Ali Haider (AD 1690-1785). As if to meet more than half way these stirrings for a search of a common identity, the Sikh Gurus, more specially Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Gobind Singh started giving a more tangible shape to the basic Sikh vision of unity of mankind by repudiating all claims for superiority of one faith over the other. They called attention to the equality of all mankind before God. That the earlier Sikh Gurus should have laid stress upon rejection mainly of caste distinctions, only underlines the immediacy that the religious question had acquired. It is only in the context of the meeting of two great civilizations, Hindu and Islamic, that one can realise the role of the Sufi mystics in reaching past the inhibitions and prejudices of an authoritarian fanaticism and building bridges of communication and understanding between conflicting faiths. The anti-particularist, anti-clerical and anti-ritualistic thrust of the teachings of the Sufi poets such as Shah Hussain, Sultan Bahu, Bulhe Shah and Ali Haider, appears more or less as an echo of similar voices one comes across in the poets of Sikh and Bhakti schools. It was this community of mutually shared feelings and thought which was underlined by Guru Arjan Dev when he conceived and realised the compilation of *Guru Granth* as an attempt at inter-religious and inter-caste dialogue.

THE true meaning of the dialogue prompted and promoted by the Sikh Gurus between the Muslim and Sikh poets, and between the medieval Indian poets from different areas and communities, lay in blending together the aspirations of common people regardless of

their faith or station in society, for a richer spiritual life without dependence on crafty priests or their complicated rituals. On this aspect of the compilation of the *Guru Granth*, Russian Indologist I.D. Serebrayakov writes:

Through the *Adi Granth* runs the basic idea that the summits of religious and philosophic thought are accessible not only to Hindu Pandits and Moslem theologians, but equally well to weavers and tanners, and that the beauties of the world and the magnificence of life are comprehensible to all.<sup>9</sup>

Both in their opposition to religious formalism and their identification with the cause of the suffering humanity, the Sikh Gurus found the compositions of Shaikh Farid, or for that matter those of other saint-poets such as Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas, sharing the same basic concern. Visualised in that aspect, the dialogue started by the Sikh Gurus aimed at transcending the religious and cultural boundaries in its search for a common base for the entire humanity.

As a matter of fact, the verses of Shaikh Baba Farid are a part of the bigger upsurge in medieval India for cultural renewal and renaissance in which the saints of Bhakti movement, Sikh Gurus and Sufi mystics played a glorious role. This movement helped to evolve a people's culture with all the necessary concomitants in the realms of religion, literature, economic urges and socio-political demands. Not only in its consequences but also in its avowed objectives, this movement was opposed to the elitist culture of the Purohits and the Mullahs. The deliberate choice of spoken languages as vehicles for articulating the vision of a new humanity and for communicating with it, was only logical. There is no gainsaying the fact that the decision of Shaikh Farid to adopt Punjabi as the medium of his lofty teachings, constitutes a turning point in his career. In the process it was metamorphosed from amorphous patois into a potent means for stirring the heart and soul.

EVEN though in the given historical situation, the dialogue initiated by the saints and Sufis wore off much earlier than expected and

without fusing the different strands of the Indian cultures, the adoption of Punjabi language by a Muslim divine of the stature of Shaikh Farid proved to be a great moment for its future. Just as the tomb of Shaikh Farid in Ajodhan inspired the Punjabi Muslims in, 'Localization of their spiritual geography to correspond broadly with the confines of Punjab,'<sup>10</sup> as pointed out brilliantly by Christopher Shackle, the touch of the Shaikh led to integration of Punjabi language with the religious culture of Islam. To those inured by the mistaken notion that Punjabi is the language of the Sikhs it may come as a shock that German Indologist, Annemarie Schimmel, in her exhaustive enquiry into the evolution of Islamic mysticism, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, has categorised Punjabi among what she has chosen to describe as Indo-Muslim languages.<sup>11</sup>

ENCOURAGED by the example of Shaikh Farid, succeeding generations, not only of Sufi mystics but of theologians, chroniclers, annotators, translators and commentators of religious texts, lexicographers, bards, romancers, narrative poets and ballad composers, laboured hard for the enrichment of the Punjabi language, especially in the matter of assimilating the Islamic cultural influences with their own native genius. Little surprise, therefore, that it is the rich repository bequeathed by them over several centuries which forms the bedrock of the literary tradition for the Pakistani Punjabi writers today. If after an estrangement for over a century and a quarter from their mother-tongue, the people of West Punjab have started responding to its demands and experiencing doubts, howsoever feeble at the moment, with regard to their continuing loyalty to Urdu, it is mainly because of the pull of the distinct cultural personality enshrined in Muslim Punjabi literature which started evolving with Shaikh Farid.

One of the basic characteristics which the poetry of Shaikh Farid, or for that matter, Punjabi Sufi poetry shares with Sikh poetry is the correlation of a deep social awareness with an essential mystic vision. Since the mystic vision manifested in these numinous works is itself motivated by an urge for securing the integrity of man against

the petrifying influences of divisions of castes and creeds, dead traditions, mechanical ritualism and priestly hypocrisy, it accommodated an attitude of critical realism towards extra-religious aspects of human life as well. It is sacred poetry with a distinct secular bias and its influence in the transformation of poetic sensibility of secular Punjabi poetry, such as medieval romances, has been quite decisive. Down to earth as it has been, the Punjabi literary tradition is characterised by an essentially critical social awareness, with the result that Punjabi literature has even been a protestant literature, no matter what forms the protest took, religious, social or political !

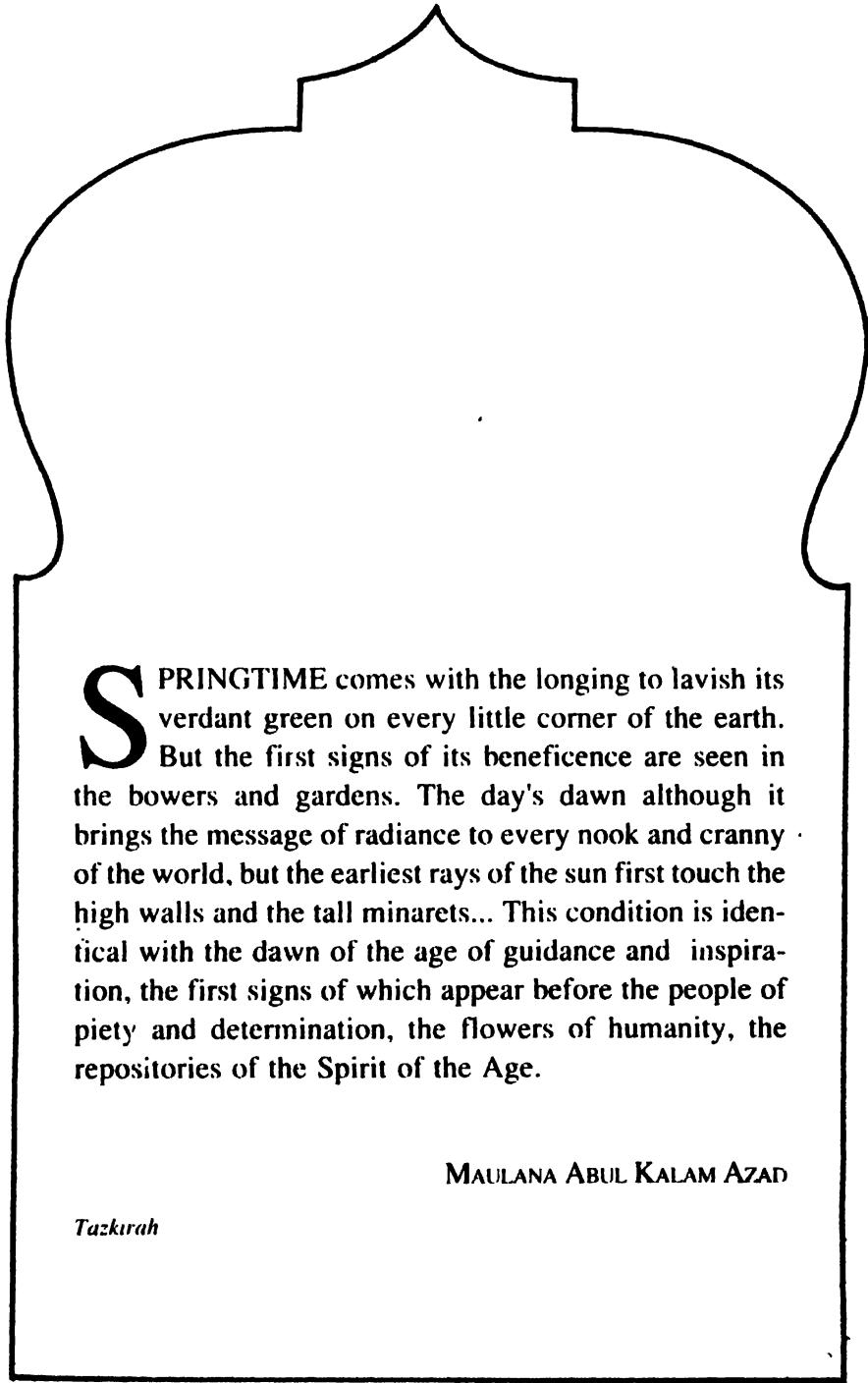
A second feature of the verses of Shaikh Farid which has left its imprint upon the character of Punjabi poetry, in general, is its intimate personal tone. These are the outpourings of a heart in anguish, and not in the nature of either supplications from down below or sermonising from up above. The soft whispering mode of direct conversation adopted by Shaikh Farid has an enduring freshness and vitality about it. The poet seeks to establish a direct rapport with the audience, without any mediation whatsoever. The poetry here is a mode of social discourse and no mere self-indulgence for its own sake. What lends further depth and meaningfulness to this discourse is the vividness of the imagery, redolent as it is of the sounds and smells of Punjab's landscape, physical, social, mythological, moral and psychological, and the warmth of the passions of an unrelenting hard struggle against nature.

THE success of such a discourse inheres in striking a balance between the natural and the moral, the physical and the spiritual, the real and the ideal, in which art Shaikh Farid displayed truly consummate skill. Highly evocative images of impending death, pain and suffering alternate in his two-line verses with austere moral exhortations providing perspective to one another at the same time as being engaged in an enduring dialogue.

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**S**PRINGTIME comes with the longing to lavish its verdant green on every little corner of the earth. But the first signs of its beneficence are seen in the bowers and gardens. The day's dawn although it brings the message of radiance to every nook and cranny of the world, but the earliest rays of the sun first touch the high walls and the tall minarets... This condition is identical with the dawn of the age of guidance and inspiration, the first signs of which appear before the people of piety and determination, the flowers of humanity, the repositories of the Spirit of the Age.

**MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD**

*Tazkirah*



# **CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF SUFISM**



# Persian - Hindu Mystical Writings Quest for a Common Ground

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Fathullah Mujtabai

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THE title of Dara Shikoh's famous work, *Majma' al-Bahrain* (*The Mingling of the Two Oceans*) is of a great symbolic significance; and though the work itself has often been criticized as superficial, unhistorical and unscientific, the spirit underlying it and the ideal at which it aimed were the most vital ones in the history of Mediaeval India. Dara's life and works were the culmination of a process which had set in several centuries before his age. It received the greatest impetus during the reign of Akbar Shah, and continued in subsequent ages in spite of the intolerance of religious reactionaries, the dogmatic outlook of Aurangzeb, and the divide-and-rule policy of the foreign rulers.

THE need for bridging the gap that separated the Hindus from the Muslims and for creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding between the two communities, was felt from the beginning of Muslim rule in India. A number of kings and princes, each in his own way, tried to lift the barrier and make the two sides meet and understand each other. Mohammad bin Tughlaq (1325-51) was

bitterly criticized by Muslim historians for treating the Hindus with deep respect, and for associating himself with yogis and pandits. Feroz Tughlaq was interested in Hindu sciences, and a number of books on medicine, astrology and music were translated from Sanskrit into Persian at his instance. Sultan Zain-al-Abidin of Kashmir (1420-70), was a great patron of Sanskrit studies and had several books translated into Persian and Kashmiri. It was during his reign that the Kashmiri poet and historian Srivara wrote his *Kathakautuka*, a Sanskrit rendering of Jami's *Yusuf wa Zulaykha*, in which Islam and Saivism meet and blend. Sultan Hussayn of Bengal (1493-1519), and his son Nusrat Shah patronized Bengali Vaisnava literature and it was through their encouragement that *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were translated into Bengali. These kings of Bengal, the Suri Sultans of North India, and the Muslim rulers of the Deccan did, in general, treat the Hindus with respect and benevolence, and had in their kingdoms Hindu ministers, treasurers, army leaders, administrators and holders of other high positions in the government.<sup>1</sup>

BESIDES rulers and political leaders, there were many people of other ranks and vocations—writers and thinkers, saints and sages—who were concerned with the Hindu-Muslim problem and contributed, in different ways, to the promotion of goodwill and understanding between the two communities. The idea was anticipated by men like Al-Biruni who, in his pioneer work, *India*, introduced the religious beliefs and cultural achievements of the Hindus to the Muslim world, translated a number of religious and philosophical works from Sanskrit into Arabic, and acknowledged the divine origin of the Hindu religion; Qazi Ruknuddin Samarqandi (7th/13th century) who, in his Persian and Arabic renderings of the *Amrita-Kunda*, brought yoga mysticism into contact with Sufi terminology; Kabir, Dadu and Namdev, who could see the same truth in the Quran and the Vedas, and believed in the essential unity of Rama and Rahim.

THE above instances were individual and sporadic. But it was Akbar Shah (1542-1605) who realized the vital significance of the

idea, developed it into a social and intellectual movement, and gave it form and direction. Akbar's conscious and strenuous efforts to create an atmosphere of fellowship and understanding among the different communities in his kingdom was the basis of his doctrine of *Sulh-i-kul* (Universal Peace) and the centre of his religious policy. An integral part of this policy was the intensive project of translating Hindu religious and philosophical works into Persian. It ensued from the inter-religious dialogues and discussions which took place in Akbar's *Ibadat-khana* (House of Worship), and was a joint enterprise in which Hindu pandits and Muslim scholars worked together. The spirit underlying this project is clearly described by Abul Fazl Allami in his introduction to the Persian translation of the *Mahabharata*, (or *Razm-nama* as it is usually called).

Having observed the fanatical hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims and being convinced that it arose only from mutual ignorance, that enlightened monarch wished to dispel the same by rendering the books of the former accessible to the latter. He selected, in the first instance, the *Mahabharata* as the most comprehensive and that which enjoyed the highest authority, and ordered it to be translated by competent and impartial men of both nations.<sup>2</sup>

UNDER Akbar's patronage such voluminous works as the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Harivamsa*, *Laghu-yoga-vasishtha*, *Bhagavat-purana* and the *Atharva-veda* were rendered into Persian, and Faizi, the poet-laureate of Akbar's court, made verse translations of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the story of *Nala and Damayanti*.

AKBAR'S extremely liberal attitude and his policy of 'Universal Peace' were of great attraction to free-thinkers and to the oppressed, even from outside India. We know that during his reign, large numbers of such people migrated from Iran to North India because of the freedom of thought and creed that they could enjoy there. Many of these newcomers are mentioned in contemporary histories and biographical works which were produced in India; and the author of

*Dabistan-i Madhahih* gives the names of a number of Adhar-Kayvani and Zoroastrian immigrants who were settled in North Indian cities.<sup>3</sup>

ONE among these immigrants was Mir Abul Qasim Findirski (d.1640-1) the famous philosopher of Isfahan.

ACCORDING to his biographies, he stayed in India for a number of years, and from his own works on the *Laghu-yoga-vasishtha* we understand that he was seriously engaged in studying Hindu philosophy and mysticism. He read the *Laghu-yoga-vasishtha* in Nizamuddin Panipati's Persian translation, and because of the monistic ideas advanced therein and their affinities to the pantheistic doctrines of Sufism, he was deeply interested in it. He wrote marginal notes on it, made a glossary of its technical terms, composed a verse in its praise, and compiled a book of extracts from its mystical teachings and paralleled each passage with a piece of Sufi poetry. In his marginal notes he tried to elucidate difficult points by comparing them with Islamic mystical and philosophical ideas, or, occasionally, by introducing Platonic or Aristotelian views, and for some of the stories of the book he gives his own allegorical interpretations. Often, to confirm the validity of Hindu religious doctrines, he adduces Quranic verses or sayings of the Prophet or of the Imams, and sometimes it becomes very clear that he, like his precursor Al-Biruni, did not doubt the divinity of Hindu scriptures.

His compilation of extracts from the Persian translation of the *Laghu-yoga-vasishtha* is of special interest. This work consists of a large number of passages dealing with Hindu mystical ideas, selected and put together, very aptly and effectively, with pieces of Sufi poetry picked from the works of 'Attar, Rumi, Shabistari, Maghribi, Hafiz and others. In this way the compiler tries to demonstrate, through comparative presentation of relevant texts, the affinities of spiritual values and ideals of Islam and Hinduism. In this work, Mir Findirski does not bring in his own views, nor does he involve himself in bold identifications as later Dara Shikoh does in comparing Vedanta and Sufism. He simply selects prose and verse passages, puts them side by

side, and lets them speak for themselves. This way, he thinks, is more honest, and therefore, more effective.

AKBAR's policy of promoting mutual respect and appreciation between the two communities was followed, though in a less organized form, by his successors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan; and under the patronage of these two monarchs, the work of translating from Sanskrit and writing on Hindu religion and mystical thought was carried on by Hindu' and Muslim scholars. Jahangir himself was deeply interested in Hindu spirituality, and in his personal memoirs there are numerous references to his interviews with Hindu saints and sages. It was, however, Shah Jahan's elder son, the learned prince Dara Shikoh (1615-1659), who made the idea of cultivating sympathy and understanding between the two communities the main objective of all his social and intellectual activities, and made a number of most remarkable contributions to the Persian-Hindu literature. He himself translated, or contributed to the translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* and a collection of 52 Upanishads into Persian; and in two of his writings, *Risala-i Haqnuma* (The Truth Revealing Epistle) and *Majma' al-Bahrayn* (The Mingling of the Two Oceans) made comparative presentations of Hindu and Islamic mystical ideas. In the former work (*Risala-i Haqnuma*) he suggests the identity of the four states of being, namely *Nasut*, *Jabarut*, *Malakut* and *Lahut*, with the four Upanishadic states of the soul, namely the state of waking (*Jagarana*), of dreaming (*Swapna*), of deep dreamless sleep (*Sushupti*) and of the Fourth or *Turiya*; in the latter work he makes bold and unconditional identifications of Islamic mystical ideas with Vedantic tenets.

HE had the *Laghu-yoga-vasishtha* re-translated into Persian, for he thought that the earlier translation and abridgements of the work did not do justice to the spiritual teaching of the original composition. According to the introduction of the work, Dara Shikoh had met Vasishtha and Rama in a vision, and Vasishtha had told them that Rama and Dara were brothers, because both of them were striving after truth. Then Rama had embraced Dara and shared with him some

sweets that Vasishtha had given to him. It was, we are told, after this vision that Dara Shikoh decided to have the book re-translated under his own supervision. Besides these, several other works were also rendered into Persian at his instance. Krishna Misra's philosophical drama *Prabodhacandrodaya* was translated by Wali Ram with the title *Gulzar-i Hal*; Kaviracarya's *Jnanasara* on Vedanta was translated by Sitaram and named *Rafi' al-Khalaf*; *Atma-Vilasa*, attributed to Sankara, was rendered into Persian by Candarbhān Brahman and given the title *Nazuk Khiyalat*. Candarbhān was Dara Shikoh's secretary, and it was he who wrote down Dara's dialogues with the Hindu sage Baba Lal Vairagi. Abdul Rahman Chishti's *Mirat al-Haqaiq*, a Sufi commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*, was also written with Dara Shikoh's encouragement.

Of all the works written or translated by Dara Shikoh, *Siri-i Akbar*, the Persian translation of the Upanishads, was by far the most significant, not only because of the intrinsic value of the original texts and the excellent quality of the translation, but also because of the universal nature of their teachings and the strong affinity of their tenets to Sufi doctrines. In every page Dara Shikoh could find evidence in support of his own belief that the Vedas were of divine origin, that the "Concealed Book" mentioned in the Quran (I vi: 77-79) was an allusion to the Upanishads, and that the Hindu sages and mystics were monotheists who worshipped God in their own languages and according to their own rites.

In Aurangzeb's charge-sheet against him, Dara Shikoh was accused of apostasy, and most modern histories characterize him as an eclectic. But, as a matter of fact, he was neither an apostate nor an eclectic. Throughout his life he was a devout Muslim and remained convinced of the veracity of his own faith. His position, essentially, was not different from those of men like Al Biruni, Qazi Ruknuddin Samarqandi, Faizi, Mir Findiriski and other Muslim thinkers who had compared Hindu ideas with Islamic doctrines and expressed similar views about the scriptures, the forms of worship and the religious

beliefs of the Hindus. The only thing that can be said against Dara Shikoh's approach is that instead of comparing and presenting similarities, he makes identifications which are often too bold and far-fetched. To speak of the unity, the truth that manifests itself in various forms and words is, in fact, one of the major themes of Sufi poetry, and Dara Shikoh was, more than anything else, a Sufi by nature and training. He had realized that Sufism and Vedanta had numerous points of agreement and affinity, and sought to make mysticism a common ground on which the two communities could meet and understand each other.

EVEN after the tragic death of Dara Shikoh, and in spite of the sway of intolerance and fanaticism during and after the reign of Aurangzeb, the spirit behind the movement continued to work. Till lately, over a hundred works, dealing with Hindu religion, philosophy and mysticism were written in Persian or translated from Sanskrit into this language by Hindu and Muslim scholars and intellectuals. This makes up a large body of literature which includes twenty-four different versions of the *Ramayana*, eleven of the *Bhagavat Purana*, eight of the *Bhagavad Gita*, eight of the *Laghu-voga-vasishtha*, six of the *Mahabharata*, and many other works dealing with mythology, cosmology, religious rites and beliefs, jurisprudence and philosophy<sup>4</sup>. The large number of works which were translated, and the abundance of the copies which were made of each of them, point to the extensive spread of these writings among the educated people of India — Hindus and Muslims. It is interesting to note that many of these writings and most of their manuscripts have been produced by Hindu scholars and scribes. In view of the fact that the knowledge of Sanskrit was the privilege accorded only to a small group of pandits and Brahmins, and since in those days Persian was highly esteemed in India as the language of culture and administration and large numbers of Hindus were also educated in it, we may reasonably believe that the number of the educated Hindus who read their religious books in the Persian language was not small.

THESE writings, whatever their value as reliable accounts of Hinduism or faithful translations of original Sanskrit texts may be, provide vivid pictures which reveal the attitude of a large segment of Muslim intelligentsia towards Hinduism, and reflect their understanding of Hindu beliefs and ideals. They present clear examples of how and on what grounds Islam and Hinduism could meet and comprehend each other. They are, in fact, the meeting ground on which two different world-views, two distinct spheres of language and thought, two great religions with different traditions and backgrounds, and with equal abilities to resist and survive, come together with the richness of their spiritual and humanistic values to face each other, not to reject and refute, but to accept and understand. To study the nature of the Hindu-Muslim dialogue in mediaeval times, I think, one cannot find more reliable and more enlightening sources than these writings. It is here that the dialogue between Islam and Hinduism actually and most vividly takes place.

### ***Notes and References***

- 1 For more details see Fathullah Mujtabai, *Aspects of Hindu Muslim Cultural Relations*, New Delhi, 1978, pp 130 ff
- 2 Quoted in Bikramjit Hasrat, *Dara Shikoh, Life and Works*, Calcutta, 1953, p. 189.
3. *Dabistan-i Madhahib*, Cawnpore, 1904, p 35
- 4 For a detailed account of these works see *Aspects of Hindu Muslim Cultural Relations*, pp 60-91

# The Role of Sufism in Building the Values of the Composite Culture of India

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Rasheeduddin Khan

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## Contemporary Relevance of Sufism

HUMAN consciousness is based not only on the mind and rationality, but also on meta-rational aspects of cognition, perception and imagination. A large mass of human-beings comprise those who exhibit different aspects of *religiosity* in their lives, without being formally *religious*, or doctrinaire. One must make a distinction between formal, habitual and bigoted attachment to organised religion, and the mystic and ethical individual sense of religiosity.

A widespread attachment to religiosity is apparent in the common people even in the last decade of the twentieth century — that is, a century of triumphant enlightenment based on reason, science, technology and enquiry — throughout the continents. It is a global phenomenon. The impact of religion, in its many varied manifestations, has percolated in different shapes and forms, in various parts of the world. While one extreme form is, what is today referred to, as *fundamentalism* (that is what we use to call earlier more directly and correctly as revivalism, orthodoxy,

conservatism, attachment to dogma, obscurantism, etc.), there are also several other forms, in which religion appears as a primordial expression of our cultural, social and moral roots.

ALL religions have four aspects, comprising: (i) dogma, rituals and formal beliefs, (ii) legal and social formulations regarding birth, marriage, death, property and inheritance, etc (iii) outlook on life, polity, world and after-life, and (iv) ethical and moral codes and principles for personal life and inter-personal relations. While there is a wide divergence between religions of West Asian, Indian and East Asian origins on the first three aspects of religious life, there is also a remarkable convergence on the fourth aspect, namely, on guiding principles of morality and ethics. There is indeed a unifying thread that emphasizes commonality between religions, when all of them emphasize love, toleration and accommodation as the essence of good and enlightened life. This aspect is emphasized, for instance, by the Bhakti marg in Hinduism, the mystic tradition in Christianity and the *Sufi* teachings in Islam.\*

REFLECTING on the themes 'Religion and Science' and 'Religiousness of Science', Albert Einstein, one of the greatest scientists of our century, and a non-conformist in religious matters, almost an agnostic, observes that the scientist's 'religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection... It is beyond question closely akin to that which has possessed the religious geniuses of all ages.' Further, Einstein added: 'In this materialistic age of ours, the serious scientific workers are the only profoundly religious people.'<sup>1</sup>

OUR own eminent philosopher Dr S. Radhakrishnan, the second President of the Republic of India, wrote: 'The spirit of science leads to the refinement of religion. Religion is not magic or witchcraft, quackery or superstition. It is not to be confused with outdated dogmas, incredible superstitions, which are hindrances and barriers, which spoil the simplicity

of spiritual life... Experience is not limited to the data of perception or introspection. It embraces para-normal phenomena and spiritual states. All religions are rooted in experience.' He adds: 'Religion is not mere intellectual conformity or ceremonial piety; it is spiritual adventure. It is not theology but practice. To assume that we have discovered final truth is the fatal error.' He emphasized, this is 'an age of humanism. Religions which are insensitive to human ills and social crimes do not appeal to the modern man. Religions which make for division, discard and disintegration and do not foster unity, understanding and coherence, play into the hands of the opponents of religion.' He adds: 'The Quran asks us not to revile those whom others worship besides Allah, lest they, out of spite, revile Allah in their ignorance...' The Quran says: 'We make no difference between one and another (of the Apostles), for we bow to Allah....'. Radhakrishnan reiterates: 'All religions require us to look upon life as an opportunity for self-realization — *atmanastu kamaya*'. He adds: 'The Buddha asks us to seek enlightenment - *bodhi* ... different religions ask us to change our unregenerate nature, to replace *avidya*, ignorance, by *vidya* or wisdom.'<sup>2</sup>

On the linkage between religion, philosophy and science, Jawaharlal Nehru says: '...religions have helped greatly in the development of humanity. They have laid down values and standards and have pointed out principles for the guidance of human life. But with all the good they have done, they have also tried to imprison truth in set forms and dogmas, and encouraged ceremonials and practices which soon lose all their original meaning and become mere routine. Religion, though it has undoubtedly brought comfort to innumerable human beings and stabilised society by its values, has checked the tendency to change and progress inherent in human society.'

He concludes: 'It is ... with the temper and approach for science, allied to philosophy, and with reverence for all that is beyond, that we must face life. Thus, we may develop an integral vision of life which embraces in its wide scope the past and the present, with all their heights and depths and look with serenity towards the future'.<sup>3</sup>

It therefore appears obvious that for the promotion of enlightenment in contemporary society, a study not merely of contemporary knowledge is adequate, but a critical and rational study of the classics of religion, philosophy, science and humanist literature is also necessary. This would restore a sense of balance and profundity in a world attuned to immediate material success at all costs, torn and alienated as it is from the great heritage of ancient wisdom, and is fragmented in its vision and interest due to the narrow focus on professional excellence, and consumer-oriented lifestyle.

At this point of world history, more than ever, when cataclysmic changes are transforming global political system, economies and socio-cultural patterns, and when basic assumptions are being questioned, it is both necessary and desirable to rationally interpret, in scientific terms, the rich and varied religious traditions, especially their humanist content and ethical underpinnings, and their permeation in folklore, folk-thought and folk-culture, which anyhow continues to remain the primordial and traditional basis of much of our social life and social norms. We cannot wish out of existence, the legacy of religions and belief-systems, especially with their continuing impact on our individual and group life. We have to take cognisance of them with imagination, and with a sense of critical adaptability, in order to appropriate those components that are vital, relevant and sustaining while rejecting the obsolete, the archaic and the moribund.

In India, as experience has shown, the 'religious mood' has been a dominant collective mood of our people. This can make or mar the texture of our common national fraternity. Religion can be a unifying force or a dividing force. Both the experiences are part of human history. Over the years, religion has been used by dominant elite and strata either for cementing or for fragmenting the polity. Religion has united human beings when its ethical-humanist message is emphasized. Religion had divided people and counterposed them in inimical groups, one against another, when it was exploited for expedient and narrow purposes of politics and power.

## Maulana Azad's world-view as Reflected in 'Tarjuman-ul-Quran'

MAULANA AZAD integrated in his personality, deep reflective scholarship of the classical Islamic mould with capacity for rational and pragmatic thinking, attuned to the abiding concerns of social transformation and political emancipation of his motherland.<sup>4</sup>

MAULANA AZAD remains a shining example of the fusion of the rationalist heritage of Islam and the compassionate heritage of India. He coalesced with endogenous creativity the Vedantic vision of many paths to truth with the Islamic doctrines of *Wahdat-e-Din* (Unity of faith) and *Sulhe-kul* (Universal peace).

He could find the echoes of the Vedantic formulation *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one small family) in the repeated Quranic message *Kan an Naas-o Unmat-un Wahidun* (Indeed, Humanity was one people/nation.) In continuation of the intellectual exertions of early pioneers of the humanist tradition of Hindu-Muslim understanding like Al-Beruni, Amir Khusro, Emperor Akbar and his great grandson, the heir-apparent of Shahjehan, the Moghal Prince Dara Shikuh,<sup>5</sup> Maulana Azad sought to examine the formulations of Upanishadic speculative thought with the quintessence of Islam, in order to build bridges of understanding between two great systems of social ethics, namely Hinduism and Islam, that dominated the multi-religious scenario of the subcontinent of India.

MAULANA AZAD's world-view is reflected in his monumental work, the *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*.<sup>6</sup> Azad argues powerfully about the 'oneness of religious faiths' (*Wahdat-i-Din*) that has been vitiated by the inevitable divergence of *Shariah* (laws) necessitated by different socio-cultural environments, and by formalistic and institutionalized schism, promoted by the followers of the diverse faiths. In his commentary on the brief seven verse opening chapter of the *Quran*, *Sura-al-Fathia*, (which he calls the natural introduction to the study of Quran), Azad emphasizes the doctrine of *rububiyat* as the quintessence of Islam in its universal appeal

and validity. *Rububiyat*, as a doctrine, entails the recognition of God as *Rabb-ul-A'lameen* (Lord of all Being; author of all Existence, circumscribing all Creation). The word *Rabb* in the Arabic language implies the role of 'the Cherisher', 'the Nourisher', 'the Sustainer', 'the Provider' for all His creation. It encompasses the attributes of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, in the henotheistic Hindu pantheon.

THE system of Divine Nurture (*Nizam-e-Ruhubiyat*) transcends all division and fragmentation of mankind based on any consideration like creed, colour, region, nation, etc. Hence, *Rabb* is not the God only of *one* people, but of *all* the people. Then Azad emphasizes that three attributes of God are reiterated continuously in the *Quran*, and hence should be recognized as fundamental, namely *al-Rahman* ('the benevolent', i.e., one who gives even without seeking) and *al-Rahim* ('the merciful', i.e., one who responds when asked, and is forgiving), and *Malik-i-Yaum-al-Din* (Master of the day of judgement, i.e., who shall dispense justice). *Providence*, *Benevolence*, *Mercy* and *Justice*, are then the four cardinal *values* inherent in a universal, omnipotent, omnipresent God. Azad lays stress on reason (*aql*) as the instrument of comprehension and explanation of all matters, divine and secular. He concludes his commentary of *Sura-al-Fatiha* by saying that when such a universal God, *Rabb ul A'lameen* guides on the *right path* - (*ihdenas-al-Sirat-al-Mustaqeem*) it is not the particular path of any race or nation, but the path on which there is universal consensus of the leaders of all the religions and of all right-minded human-beings, may they belong to any race and any age. Commitment to universal humanism, he says is indeed the essence of the Quranic message.

A very clear, powerful and profound enunciation of his perception of Islam is contained in his concluding essay in the *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* entitled 'The Educational Spirit of *Sura-al-Fatiha*'.<sup>7</sup> He writes:

'LET us, for a moment, look at the *Sura-al-Fatiha* as a whole and see what type of mind it reflects or tried to build.'

'HERE is a person singing the praise of his Lord. But the Lord he

praises, is not the Lord of any particular race or community or religious group but the Lord of all world, *Rabb ul A'lameen*, the source of sustenance and mercy uniformly for all mankind. The devotee invokes God in the name of His attributes. But of all His attributes, those of mercy and justice particularly strike his mind, as if divinity manifests itself for him wholly in divine justice and mercy, and that all that he knows of his God is nothing except that his God is just and merciful. And then he bows down his head in supplication and admits of his entire dependence on his Lord. He utters: 'Thee alone do I worship, and from thee alone do I seek help.' The devotee thus thinks of his Lord as an abiding source of all help to him in life and discards every thought of dependence on any other. Thus strengthened in spirit, he thinks of his duty in life. He feels that he must pursue his life in a manner pleasing to his Lord. He therefore asks of God to give him the urge to pursue his life. This is his primary prayer. He asks of his Lord to show the path trodden by those with whom God was always pleased. That is his concept of the Straight Path. The path that he wishes to walk on is not the path devised by any particular religious group. The path that he has in view is that royal road, the Straight Path which the founders of all religions and all truthful people have walked on, whatever the age or country they belonged to. In his anxiety to keep to his path, he seeks the protection of God. He wants to be saved from either straying away from that straight path or from taking to the paths which wayward people have pursued, and while so wishing, he does not refer to the communities or religious groups to which such wayward people have belonged. What he asks for is the privilege to walk on a path which has meant the happiness of all mankind, and not on a path which has led to their ruin.

THINK over, what type of mind does all this argue or aim to build? Whatever view one may take, this is clear that the mind which the *Sura-al-Fathia* depicts is a type of mind which reflects the beauty and mercy of God of universal compassion. It is in no sense fettered by prejudices of race or nation or other exclusive groupings. It is a mind imbued with universal humanism. This is the true spirit of the Quranic invitation.'

## India - The Socio-Cultural Co-mingling

ONE of the greatest contributions of India in the realm of culture has been the slow and steady, even if occasionally disrupted, process of the evolution of a unique cultural amalgam, a cultural synthesis of many strands and segments, popularly referred to as composite culture, or *ganga-jamni tehzib* in Hindi and Urdu. It has been a historical process, inevitable in a country of a continental size, where over the centuries a continuous stream of immigrants have trickled down from the several contiguous regions of Asia.<sup>8</sup>

THE Dravidians, the Aryans, the Semetics and the Mongoloids, in varied patterns of permutation and combination, provide the ethnic substratum of Indian civilization. The pagan Aryan tribes followed by the Sakas, the Yue-chi, Kushans, Bactrians, Scythians and the Huns had made inroads into Bharata-varsha in the hoary past, even as the Muslim migratory clans of the Uzbeks, the Turkoman, the Tajiks, the Iranian, the Turanian, the Afghan, and the Pathan moved in during the medieval times and made Hindustan their homeland. With multi-ethnic migrants came their dialects and belief patterns, social systems and value-structures, all contributing to the expanding cultural diversity and social diffusion in the historic process of the building of what is today the continental plural society of India, comprising a fifth of the total human population.

IN the words of the famous Urdu poet, Raghupati Sahai Firaq Gorakhpuri: 'Sarzamin-e-Hind Par, aqwaam-i-aalam key Firaq/Qafley aatey gayey, Hindustan banta gaya' ('On the fertile soil of India, O Firaq, caravans of varied nationalities of the world keep on coming/and in this way India was continuously getting built').

IN terms of cultural depth and intensity and wider social repercussions, the two most profound influences on the making of a distinct Indian civilization, are those of the ancient *Indo-Aryan* and the medieval *Indo-Muslim* segments. The Indo-Aryans contributed to the flowering of Vedic

cultural streams that, over the centuries, have continued to fertilize the body-politic of this ancient land, and even today, remains the sub-soil of acculturation. The Indo-Muslim strands have weaved into the texture of India's national existence, a rich design of 'composite culture', by intertwining the threads of the *Bhakti Marg* with the *Islamic Sufi* (Mystic) traditions, the Indian social customs with the Turko-Iranian mores of collective life, thereby creating a new inter-cultural synthesis, in which the values of Man and social ethics reflected a new ethos.

It is not surprising, therefore, to realize that the composite culture in India originated in an environment of reconciliation rather than refutation, cooperation rather than confrontation, coexistence rather than mutual annihilation.

INTO the making of this composite culture has gone a chequered history of about a thousand years, interlaced not only with episodes of clash of arms, tussles for power and supremacy but also the more abiding encounters marked by the fraternal cooperation of divergent people learning to live together as compatriots, and prompted in this endeavour by the benevolent spell of the humanist saints, mystics and bhakts of the age, and by the more enlightened citizen-leaders, poets, musicians, craftsmen, artisans, story-tellers, social reformers and secular nationalist political leaders and statesmen.

HISTORICALLY, therefore, India has been one of the greatest confluences of cultural strands, a laboratory of racial inter-mixing of cross-fertilisation of religious ideas and secular thought, of co-existence of languages and dialectics, indeed a veritable microcosm of the globe.<sup>9</sup>

INDIA comprises today myriad streams of cultures, about 18 major languages, between 250 to 2000 dialectics, a dozen ethnic groups, 8 religious communities fragmented into many sects, about 3000 jatis-castes and sub-castes, that inhabit its 58 socio-cultural sub-regions. India is the world's oldest, largest and the most tenacious plural society, the like of which human history has seldom known.<sup>10</sup>

## The Ideational roots of Composite Culture

ETYMOLOGICALLY, the term *composite* was first used in *architecture* (which incidentally is the only one recognised by Dr. Johnson in his Dictionary). It referred to the fifth of the classical orders, being composed of the Ionic grafted upon the Corinthian. Later on, the term has been used in *Mathematics* (to refer to *composite number*), which is the product of two or more factors, greater than unity); in *Natural History* (to mean an organic aggregation of individuals or of distinct parts); in *Botany* (to identify a flower that consists really of a close-head of many small flowers 'florats' sensible on a common receptacle) and, of late, in *photography* (for a photo that combines several separate pictures). In *common language* it is a term referring to anything made up of various parts or elements, that is a compound. Its synonyms include words like: blended, eclectic, syncretic, multiform, variegated, inter-mixed, pluralistic, etc. A thing is called composite, when it is made up of various and disparate parts or elements; as an organic aggregation of distinct parts.

PHILOSOPHICALLY, composite culture would mean that peculiar brand of culture that represents the rejection of mono-cultural domination and re-affirmation of pluralism and syncreticism, as the valid, the stable and the desirable basis for cultural efflorescence in a mixed society and plural polity like India. Composite culture is a product of borrowing, sharing and fusing through overtime processes of interaction between two or more streams. The basic assumption is that such cultural symbioses has a propensity for greater vitality, through larger acceptability, than mono-culture, either of the dominant or the dominated ethnic segment, within a region, and much less so in the huge continental sweep of India.

TODAY, what we call 'composite culture' includes more than its original mediaeval form. It has widened its dimensions in the last two hundred years, in the wake of the encounter with European industrialisation, and the mighty sweep of the national liberation movement.

IN broad essentials the composite culture of India, includes at least

the following seven streams of influence:

(i) *The Vedantic vision.* This had been imbued with a sense of toleration and even respect for the many paths to truth, and it has subsumed the *essence of the philosophy of the Bhagvad Gita*, that salvation is through action, and action is duty well done without expectation of reward.

(ii) *The traditions of Bhakti-marg.* The emphasis had been on 'love' as the axial principle of life – love of God and love of Man, as the means of the Mystic vision and the unitive state, for the attainment of *Sat* (Truth), *Chit* (Consciousness), *Ananda* (Bliss) in order to attain *Moksha* (Liberation from the chain of rebirth).

(iii) *The humanist concepts of Islam.* These included *fraternity of the human race; justice* as the governing principle of social ethics, *charity* towards the have-nots, *rejection of priesthood, simplicity of dogma, mono-theism*, emphasis on the beneficent (*Rehman*) and the merciful (*Rahim*) attributes of God, with implications for mercy and beneficence towards the creatures of God in fulfilment of the 'obligations towards humanity' (*haq-al-ibad*).

(iv) *The message of 'Sulhe-kul' (peace for all and complete peace) of the Muslim Sufi Silsilas* (mystic orders.) The Sufi saints became popular heroes, as charismatic focus of human charity, fraternisation of different communities, upholders of the rights of man and dissenters against the tyranny of the Sultans and the feudal aristocracy. Their *Khanqahs* (guest houses) provided refuge to the wretched, the miserable, the downtrodden and the disinherited.

(v) *The elegance and ethos of the syncretic Indo-Muslim cultural values.* These are manifested in social relations, professional ties, interpersonal dealings, etiquettes of daily life (marked with cultivated urbanity, gentility and restraint, deference towards elders and compassion towards dependants, etc.) and refinement in tastes (sartorial, culinary, household, life-style, etc.).

(vi) *The cosmopolitanism of the modern urban development.* This had sought to provide an incipient cultural form, for the migrants

from the rural hinterland, as well as the increasing progeny in the city, caught-up in the vortex of change brought by the introduction of the Machine, the organised bureaucracy, secular laws (whose observance was supervised by 'Christian' colonial masters), western-scientific education imparted through the English language, and the rise of the Indian bourgeoisie, urban professional and proletariat classes. Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Allahabad (between mid-19th and mid-20th century) provide four different patterns of study, replete with similarities yet marked with contrasts.

(vii) *The heritage of the Indian National Movement.* The national movement for liberation and national reconstruction of Indian polity was itself the most magnificent expression of composite culture in national life. It provided an all-India platform for articulating the values inherent in composite culture, and thereby drew sustenance from the heritage of composite culture and in turn enriched it with contemporary and more relevant values of collective life, like secular nationalism, democracy, equal rights, promotion of science, technology and rationalist temper. It was the most broad-based anti-colonial mass movement in history. It was a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-regional and multi-lingual movement, non-xenophobic and forward-looking, stretching its hands to other liberation movements, in the firm conviction that fight against imperial systems, colonialism, racial discrimination and ethnic domination, is a world-wide challenge, requiring concerted world-wide response. The finest elements in the Indian National Movement subscribed to the values of humanism and human fraternity, pluralism of cultures and unity of political action for freedom, democratic construction, secular polity and nationalism as part of interdependent internationalism.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Philosophical Origins and Traditions of the Composite Culture of India**

In stark simplicity, the formative ideational elements of the composite culture should be recognised as a product of the encounter between

the streams of Hindu traditions, the *Vedanta*, (Upanishads) and the *Bhagvad Gita*, and the *tariqat* (Mystic Sufi-path) stream of Islamic consciousness. In its modern manifestation however, the impact of Christian ideals, European thought and British institutions, had further refined and expanded its range, and the Indian National Movement for Independence gave impetus to its wider acceptability, by the increasingly large number of the educated and the enlightened citizens particularly in the urban areas.

LET us at this point, briefly comprehend the nature of Hinduism and the Muslim-Sufi traditions in India.

WHAT is the connotation of the term Hinduism? Is it only a religion, a belief system, or something more and different?

HINDUISM is no religion in the Semetic sense of the word, that is, if the paradigm of West Asian belief-system, the Judaic-Christians-Islamic combine is acknowledged as the normative form. It is something more and different than religion. It is a mix of customs, traditions, social behaviour, rituals, metaphysical speculations, cultural and value orientations. There is no duality of orthodoxy and heresy in Hinduism, because there is no defined and closed faith, no established church based on the foundations of a divine scripture revealed by a 'Divine Being' to divinely ordained Prophet/Prophets. This gives Hinduism a flexibility and a resilience and a traditional base wide enough to cover the syndrome of the entire Indian culture. That is why sometimes the revivalism of Hinduism takes the form of revivalism of ancient culture, symbols, values, idiom and simplistic traditional pattern of living. It does not take the particular form of the revival of a faith because there is no such ordained, integral and defined faith to be revived. Hinduism's religious content has been generally referred to as Brahmanism, while the term Hindu (adapted from Sindhu, i.e. the inhabitants in, around and beyond (to the East of) the River Indus/Sindhu) which was used by the ancient Persians, Greeks and later by the Arabs, referred essentially to the ethnic geographic identity of the inhabitants. Irrespective of belief and religion, language of culture,

every Indian is a *Hindu* to the Arabs, the Iranian and Turks as to most others, even now.

A very apt quotation from Jawaharlal Nehru will throw light on this aspect. In the *Discovery of India* he wrote:

The word 'Hindu' does not occur at all in our ancient literature. The first reference to it in an Indian book is, I am told, in a *Tantrik* work of the eighth century AD, where 'Hindu' means a people and not the followers of a particular religion. But it is clear that the word is a very old one as it occurs in the *Avesta* and in old Persian. It was used then and for thousand years or more later by the peoples of Western and Central Asia for India, or rather for the people living on the other side of the Indus river. The word is clearly derived from *Sindhu*, the old, as well as the present Indian name for the Indus. From this *Sindhu* came the words Hindu and Hindustan, as well as Indus and India. The famous Chinese pilgrim I-tsing, who came to India in the seventh century AD, writes in his record of travels that the northern tribes, that is the people of Central Asia, called India 'Hindu' (Hsin-tu) but, he adds, 'this is not at all a common name... and the most suitable name for India is the Noble land (Aryadesha).' The use of the word 'Hindu' in connection with a particular religion is of very late occurrence.<sup>12</sup>

'The old inclusive term for religion in India was *Arya dharma*. Dharma really means something more than religion. It is from a root word which means to hold together: it is the inmost constitution of a thing, the law of its inner being. It is an ethical concept which includes the moral code, righteousness, and the whole range of man's duties and responsibilities. *Arya dharma* would include all the faiths (*Vedic* and non-*Vedic*) that originated in India; it was used by Buddhists and Jains as well as by those who accepted the *Vedas*. Buddha always called his way to salvation as the 'Arya Path'.

THE philosophy of Hinduism has developed in the last four thousand years, in six well-recognised periods of time:

- |                             |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| (i) 2500 to 600 B.C.        | - | <i>The Vedic Period;</i>  |
| (ii) 600/500 B.C. to AD 200 | - | <i>The Epic Period;</i>   |
| (iii) AD 200 to 800         | - | <i>The Sutra Period;</i>  |
| (iv) AD 800 to 1300         | - | <i>The Scholastic Period;</i>   |
| (v) AD 1300 to 1700         | - | <i>The Period of the great Bhakti Saints; and</i>                                 |
| (vi) AD 1800 - 1950 AD      | - | <i>The Period of Reform Movements and Philosophical Revivalism.</i> <sup>13</sup> |

Two aspects of the Hindu traditions, relevant to our discussion, may now be mentioned.

For 'the emancipation of the soul' (*moksha*), which is the highest goal of human exertion in Hindu thought, and which in secular language may be called the quest for a morally good life, the Hindu traditions recognize three paths:<sup>14</sup>

*Karma-marga* (literally, the 'path of action', but actually the path of conformism to doctrines, acceptance of destiny and resignation to moral fate within the framework of the four-fold Caste (*Varna*) and four-fold stages of life (*asrama*), that is *varnasrama dharma* (predestined order of life).

*Jnana-marga* (literally, the 'path of knowledge', as epitomised in Upanishads and the Sutra literature dealing with discussions regarding cosmic origin, human destiny, good and evil, nature of the ultimate reality and its relation to the individual etc., and

*Bhakti-marga* (literally, the 'path of devotion,' that helps the 'devotee' to attain salvation through love of a personal god and compassion towards fellowmen, is sometime referred to as the emotional aspect of faith, in contradiction to 'intellectual' or the 'conative' as implied respectively in *Jnana* and the *Karma margas*. The biggest sources of inspiration for the *Bhakti-marg*, is *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Narayaniya* section of the *Santiparvam* of *Mahabharata* , and the *Bodhisattva* and *Amitabha* concepts in *Mahayana Buddhism*.<sup>15</sup>

IT is the *Bhakti-marga*, which began as a little trickle in the Vedic times, went out with the advance of history as a mighty flood sweeping over the whole land, even as the *Jnana-marga* remained confined to the priestly (and arrogant) few, and *Karma-marga* got stultified into compliance with ascribed duty.

THE second aspect that needs to be stressed is that there has been a persistent dichotomy in the Hindu society, reflective of more than mere class cleavages or differentiation of status groups in any society. The existence of two distinct social strata or two levels of consciousness, one higher and the other lower, one smaller and the other more populous, the one as 'closed' custodians of traditional knowledge and philosophy, of social ideas and institutions, and the second comprising the general mass of people with their folk and regional traditions, on the lower rung of the social and cultural ladder had almost permanently bifurcated the Hindu society at the vertical level.<sup>16</sup> Brahminical social exclusiveness, monopoly of knowledge, refusal to allow the lower-caste even the learning of the Sanskrit language, discrimination in rituals and social intercourse, and endogamy, all of which represented a sort of operational socio-cultural apartheid had kept the Hindu society divided into compartments, and its castes almost counterposed to each other. Inequality and segregation was permitted and even sanctified by dharma-shastra and by the laws of Manu that dominated the scene.

### **The origins and growth of the Muslim Sufi traditions**

LET us at this point recapitulate the origins and growth of the Muslim Sufi traditions.

BEFORE the Sufi orders (*silsilah*) emerged on the Indian scene in the latter half of the 12th century AD, Islamic mysticism had already developed a large corpus of knowledge and practices. Indeed all the great names among the Sufis of Arabia, Persia, Central Asia and Spain were

already inscribed on the pages of Islamic history, prior to the mighty spread of Sufism on the Indian soil.<sup>17</sup>

THERE were four distinct stages in the development of Islamic Sufi traditions in other parts of the world:

*AD 623-800: The Period of the Quietist Mystics.* The Sufi tradition in Islam can be traced, in its incipient form, even to the time of Prophet Mohammad (AD 571-632) when *Ashab-e-Suffa* (Companions of the Platform), known for their piety, poverty and philosophical proclivity were considered to have formed an esoteric group in AD 623. For them the Prophet himself was a mystic, and Ali, who later became the last of the four Virtuous Caliphs (*Khulafa-i-Rashideen*) (632-61), has been recognised throughout Islamic history as the fountainhead of Islamic mysticism, as their patron head. Among the early Sufi pioneers, the name of al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 728) of the famous occultist Jabir-ibn-Hayyan (ca.776) and his contemporary Ibrahim ibn-Adham of Balkh (ca. 777) are well known.<sup>18</sup>

*AD 800-1100: The Period of Early Mystic Theorists.* Among the second round of mystics, names of Abu-Sulayman al Darani (d. 849/50) of Damascus, and his older contemporary Maruf al-Karkhi of Baghdad (d. 815) and above all the Persian Bayazid al-Bustami (d. 875), whose grandfather was a Magian or Zorastrian and, whose teacher Abul Ali al-Sindi, is reputed to have been influenced by Advaitic philosophy of Sankara, and Buddhist thought, are well known.<sup>19</sup> It was Bayazid al-Bustami, who had introduced the doctrine of *fana* (self-annihilation or the passing away of the self) reminiscent of Buddhist *Nirvana*, and Vedantic monism, in Islamic mysticism. His contemporary Shaikh Junaid (d. AD 900) of Baghdad revered for 'mystic sobriety', believed in the theory of 'union', that is oneness of existence and the communion between God and man.<sup>20</sup> It was his pupil Hasan-ibn Mansur-al-Hallaj (d. 972), the prince of mystic martyrs, who was flogged and burnt to death by the Abbasid inquisitors for the formula *Ana'al-Haq* (I am the truth/God) which had reverberated for centuries as the most daring mystic utterance ever made.

*AD 1100-1200: The Period of Spanish-Arab Intellectualism.* One of the greatest names in Sufism, has been of the Spaniard, Muhyiuddin Mohammad ibn-Arabi (1165-1240) buried in Damascus and known as Shaikh-i-Akbar (the great teacher), who was a brilliant monist and pantheist ('All is God') and gave a system and a method to Islamic Sufism.<sup>21</sup>

At this point, it may be added that Muslim Spain (Andalusia, 711-1609), in the words of Bertrand Russell: 'Wrote one of the brightest chapters in the intellectual history of mediaeval Europe. Between the middle of the eighth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries the Arabic speaking people were the main bearers of the torch of culture and civilization throughout the world. In all this, Arabic Spain had a large share.'<sup>22</sup> The four most outstanding intellectual precursors of ibn-Arabi in Muslim Spain were Ali ibn-Hazm (994-1064) of Cordova, ibn-Bajjah (d.1138) who lived in Seville and Granada, and was known in Europe as Avempace, his pupil ibn-Tufeyal (d.1185), and the incomparable ibn-Rushd (126-1198) born in Cordova, and known in the West as Averroes, and recognized as 'the second Aristotle'.<sup>23</sup>

*AD 1100-1500: The Period of Sufi efflorescence.* In the entire belt of the Fertile Crescent from Jerusalem and Damascus with Baghdad as the hub of activity, extending to the Iran-Central Asian region, covering cultural centres like Khurasan, Khwarizm, Tus, Nishapur and Balkh, a mighty upsurge of intellectual enquiry, rationalism, and Sufi traditions was taking place. The contemporary of the Spaniard ibn-Arabi, was the Persian Sufi, Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi (1145-1234).

THE first Sufi fraternity that was formed as an established path (*tariqah*) was the Qadariyah silsilah, whose founder was the Persian Shaikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani (1077-1166) who lived, preached and died in Baghdad. He is referred to by the common devotees in India as the Patron Saint (Piran-i-Pir or Bareh Pir). It is his order which, with certain subsidiary orders, is probably the most widespread Sufi order throughout the Muslim world, covering North and West Africa, and West, Central, South and South-East Asia in its fold. In the Indian subcontinent the

*Qadiriyya* and its affiliate the *Chistiyya* silsilah has been the most dominant throughout the last 700-800 years. In terms of ethical teachings, imbued with mystic humanism and literary grace, the three outstanding names in the 'Ajam region are those of the Persian Sufi teachers: Shaikh Fariduddin Attar (1136-1230) of Nishapur, Shaikh Saadi Shirazi (1184-1292) the world-renowned author of *Bostan* and *Gulistan*, and one of the greatest intellectual luminary, and incomparable mystic poet Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) who was born in Balkh, lived in Tus and Nishapur and died in Kuniyah in Turkey, whose six-volume *Mathnavi* of 26,000 couplets is probably the greatest and the most brilliant exposition of Sufi thought in the Persian language. The oft-repeated comment is: 'Mathnavi-e-Mawlavi-e-Maanvi/Hast Quran dar zaban-i-Pehlawi' (the Mathnavi of the profound scholar (i.e. Mawlana Rumi) is indeed Quran in the Persian language.)<sup>24</sup>

It was this rich and varied heritage of the early Muslim Sufi traditions – of Baghdad, Damascus, Jerusalem, Aleppo, Cordova, Seville, Granada, Khorasan, Tus, Nishapur, Balkh, Khwarizm, Shiraz, Ghazna, Herat etc. – that provided a universal dimension to the core teachings of the Sufi saints of India.

### The Sufi Saints, the Bhakti Yogis and the Mystic Poets of India

It was in the last decade of the 12th century that the first Sufi order was firmly established in India, by the great Chisti Saint, Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chisti (1143-1234). He was born in Seistan and came to India at the direction of his teacher Khwaja Usman Haruni in 1190 during the reign of Rai Prithviraj, the powerful Chauhan King of Ajmer and Delhi. In his youth Khwaja Ajmeri had also visited Baghdad to spend time at the Khanqah of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, the great founder of the Qadiriah silsilah. It is true that before him many Sufi teachers had come to India, like Shaikh Ali Hujwiri, popularly known as Data Gunj Baksh of Lahore(d. after 1089), at whose tomb Khwaja Moinuddin spent much time in meditation, before moving to Ajmer in 1197, as the permanent

centre of his activities.<sup>25</sup>

THERE were also several towns in north India like Multan, Lahore, Badaun, Kanauj, Nagore, etc., where Sufi teachings were spreading since the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century. But it was left to Khwaja Ajmeri to go down in history as the '*Sultan-ul-Hind*' (The spiritual sovereign of India) and the *Naib-e-Rasul-ullah fil Hind* (the Vice-regent of the Prophet in India). He remains the 'Patriar Saint' of the subcontinent. His main effort was to promote harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims, to combat against caste inequalities and other inhumanities by preaching the message of Monism, Peace, Harmony and social ethics. His piety, simplicity and sincerity won him many devotees, from different castes and creeds.<sup>26</sup>

ALTHOUGH Abul-Fazl in *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions fourteen Sufi silsilahs as active in India by the 16th century, but the fact remains that in terms of their following and better organization, only six silsilahs should be recognised as active and influential. Of these, the *Chistiyyah*, founded in India by Khwaja Ajmeri [though begun by Khwaja Abdul Chisti (d.966) in Iran] attracted the largest of devotees, both Muslims and Hindus, and also made a profound impact on the course of the new Bhakti movement among the Hindus that gained momentum in the 14th century, and spread out to many parts of the country in the next three hundred years. The only other Silsilah active in the Sultanate period (1206-1526) was the *Suhrawardia*, with its headquarters in Multan, and later extending to Sindh, which was established in India by Shaikh Bahauddin Zakaria (d.1192). Then came the *Firdausi* silsilah, mainly restricted to Bihar, that was founded by Shaikh Badruddin Samarqandi and was spread by the prolific writer of mystic literature Shaikh Sharfuddin Yahya Muniri around the 13th century, followed by the *Qadiriya* and the *Shuttariah* silsilah in the middle of the 15th century. The *Qadriyah* was established in India by Shah Nayamatullah Qadiri, and the *Shuttariah* by Shah Abdullah Shuttari (d.1458), the former silsilah had spread in Uttar Pradesh and the Deccan while the latter mainly in the Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat regions. In the reign of Akbar (1556-1605) the last major

silsilah, the *Naqshbandiah* was established by Khwaja Baqibillah (1563-1603) whose most famous successor was Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi (d.1625) known as 'Mujaddid Alf-e-Saani' (The Reformer of the second millennium.)<sup>27</sup>

IN the dominant *Chistiyah* Silsilah, Khwaja Ajmeri (d.1234) was succeeded by a galaxy of brilliant saints for almost a continuous period of two hundred years, whose names still evoke tremendous popular devotion and reverence, and around whom an entire movement of human fraternity was built. These saints of the people, rose in public estimation for their message of love, humanism, compassion, and above all for their heroic defiance of autocracy and tyranny, scrupulous dissociation from holding offices of religious affairs under the Sultans, and for keeping distance from the life and life-style of the feudal aristocrats and propertied strata of the mediaeval society.

KHWAJA Ajmeri's principle successor, Khwaja Qutubuddin Baktiar Kaki (d.1235) established the Chisti centre in Delhi.<sup>28</sup> This was the time of recurrent Mongal invasion throughout Central Asia, where many centres of cultural life were destroyed. Scholars, artists, men of skills and crafts were flocking to Delhi, 'which had by the end of the 13th century become one of the great centres of Muslim learning.' Sultan Iltutmish (d.1236) was such an ardent devotee of the Khwaja, that he built the famous Qutub Minar in Delhi to perpetuate his memory. But even then the Saint declined to accept the Sultan's offer of the high office of *Shaikh-ul-Islam*. This was the saint who is known to have died in a state of ecstacy, when the Qawwal recited the verse: 'Those who are slain by the dagger of submission (to the will of God)/To them new life returns from the Unknown, at every moment of Time.'<sup>29</sup> Remembering this verse and the role of the Saint, it is a strange mystic coincidence to recollect that at the time of the Hindu-Muslim carnage following the partition of India in 1947-48, it was to the musoleum of this Saint of Delhi that Gandhiji had gone to pray, barely a week before his own martyrdom, which has given a new poignancy to the verse that reverberates within a new secular paraphrase, something to suggest that: 'Those who are slain in the path

of serving mankind/To them immortality is assured with the gratitude of posterity.'

KHWAJA Qutub had nine successors, among whom the most famous was Baba Fariduddin Masud Gunj Shakar (1175-1265) who moved over to Ajodhyan and died in Pakpattan. Baba Farid, as he is popularly known, was an extreme ascetic, who abjured company and popularity, and preferred solitude and contemplation. He firmly advised his followers: 'Do not make friends with Kings and Nobles. Consider their visits to your home as fatal for your soul', and this despite the great reverence in which Sultan Balban (d.1287) held him.<sup>30</sup>

His *Khanqah* became the refuge of scholars including Hindu Yogis and destitutes. He made a deep impression on the Bhakti saints, particularly Sant Kabir and Guru Nank, the two founders of the Kabir-Panthi sect and the Sikh religion, respectively. So deep was his influence on Nanak that the slokhas (*verses*) of Baba Farid have been incorporated in the Holy book of the Sikhs, *Guru Granth Sahib*, and have been sung now in the Sikh temples for the last five hundred years. He is regarded as the first Punjab poet of Sufism, although he also wrote in Persian, Arabic, apart from in Punjabi and other local dialects.

Of the five well-known successors of Baba Farid, the name of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi (1236-1325) evokes the greatest admiration. Born in Badaun, after spending few years with his teacher at Ajodhyan he returned to Delhi where he dominated the spiritual scene for nearly sixty years. He is recognised by many as 'the greatest Indo-Muslim Saint of all times', who survived the ups and downs of three dynasties of seven Sultans, without ever visiting a durbar, which he thought was beneath the dignity of a true Sufi. Yet he had a great fondness for Amir Khusrau, the mystically inclined aristocrat and courtier, a versatile genius, who used to spend his days with the Sultans and nights of devotion at the *Khanqah* of Nizamuddin Auliya. It is in his poems and odes, sung over the centuries by the *Qawwals* (religious singers) that Saint Nizamuddin figures prominently.

SHAIKH Nizamuddin's liberal and tolerant outlook, offended the orthodox mullah but helped the spread of his message throughout the country and gained for him the popular title, *Mahboob-i-Ilahi* (the beloved of the God). His tomb in Delhi, built over his grave by Sultan Mohammad bin Tughlak, (despite the Saints wish: 'I want no monument over my grave; lay me to rest in broad and open plain') remains even after six and a half centuries that had seen the rise and fall of mighty empires, and the destruction and rebuilding of the City of Delhi several times over, a constant point of pilgrimage, and of massive congregation of people of all castes and creeds, Hindus and Muslims. An interesting anecdote that reveals the broadminded and humanist approach of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya is recorded by his contemporaries. While strolling on the roof of his *Khanqah*, he saw a procession of Hindu devotees, with music and chanting proceeding towards the river Jumna. With obvious delight and an inborn sense of toleration and appreciation of other religious traditions he uttered a beautiful poetic line: 'Har qaum raast rahey, din-ey wa qibla gahey' (Every people has its own path of righteousness, beliefs and focus of adulation). To this Amir Khusrau added a line impromptu, alluding to the slanting cap on the master's head: 'Mun qibla raast kardam bar simptey Kajkulah-ey' (We however, turn our focus of adulation in the direction of the man with the slanted cap).<sup>32</sup>

SHAIKH Nizamuddin Auliya's successors spread throughout the country - one to Hansi, another to Gulbarga, a third to Bengal, and two remained in Delhi, of whom Shaikh Nasiruddin Mahmud (d. 1356), who was later known as *Chirag-i-Delhi* (the lamp of Delhi) was a charismatic saint, whose '100 Conversations' (as reported in *Khairul Majalis*) reflected melancholy at the state of affairs in social and economic life, caused by political upheavals, bad administration, price rise and general anarchy.<sup>33</sup> 'Happiness', however he reminded, 'is only found in the house of the voluntary poor (*faqr*). There is of course sorrow and sadness also in this, but that is due to the search for Truth (*Haq*), not due to the affairs of this world. Consequently this sadness, leads to spiritual joy and delight.' 'The Prophet', he said, 'was a man of prolonged sadness and deep reflection.'<sup>34</sup>

WITH the death of Shaikh Nasiruddin *Chirag-i-Delhi*, the first phase of Chisti silsilah ends. One of his successors was Syed Muhammad Gesu Daraz (d.1421) who went to Gulbarga in Karnataka in the South, at the time when the great Bahmani Sultanate (1347-1484) was established by Hasan Gangu Bahmani in 1347. Syed Gesu Daraz was a prolific writer of over thirty books on *Tasawwuf* (Mysticism).<sup>35</sup> His love for the poor and the lowly and his defence of the rights of man earned him the title of *Bandanawaz* (benefactor of God's Creatures). He was one of the early poets and writers in the Urdu language— a new language that had grown as a synthesis of the Persian, Turkish and Arabic on the one hand and of the Indians dialects like Khari Boli, Braj and Punjabi on the other, with its base in Sanskrit syntax and etymology drawn from many sources.

A famous couplet of Shah Khamosh of Hyderabad Deccan reflects the credo of the *Sufi* and the *bhakt*. The impeccable couplet is: 'Kufr kafir to bhala, Shaikh ko Islam bhala/Aashiqan aap bhaley apna dil araam bhala' (To the *Kafir* his *kufr* (disbelief) and to the Shaikh his Islam (belief) is best/But lovers are better left to themselves and to the Beloved).

In a similar mood, there is a beautiful couplet of the famous Urdu poet Meer Taqi Meer (1724-1810), which sums up the philosophy of universal truth and love: 'Us key faroogh-e-husn say jhamkey hay sub mein noor/shamey haram ho ya key diya Somnath ka' (It is the extension of His beauty that illuminates everything/It may be the lamp of the Kaaba or the candle of the Somnath temple).

THE dominant syncretic trend and humanistic thought in India had seldom been manifest more clearly and profoundly than in the *Slokas* and *Bhajans* of the Bhakti saints, poets and singers. The first period of the Bhakti movement culminated between 7th and 12th centuries AD as a revolutionary response to the decadence of Buddhism and Jainism, that had earlier held sway also in the South. With the proliferation of saintly hymn makers of Tamilnadu, the celebrated *Adiyars* (Saiva saints) and the *Alvars* (Vaishnava saints), the Bhakti cult had a resurgence, which later challenged even the theoretical formulations of Sankara. While the movement had begun in the Pallava time (7th century AD) it spread in the

reign of the Rashtrakutas and Eastern Chalukyas (9th century AD) and continued in the time of the Imperial Cholas (10th and 11th centuries AD) in the southern part of the Indian peninsula.

The second mighty upsurge of the Bhakti cult swept the whole of the Indo-Gangetic plain, from the 13th to the 18th centuries, covering more than fourteen linguistic-cum-culture zones of the subcontinent, namely the Braj, Awadh, Bhojpur, Khariboli and Maithili sub-regions of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, the Kashmir, the Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Sindh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Bengal and Assam.<sup>36</sup>

THE names of the more famous Bhakti-yogis, and poets (whose number might well have been over a hundred) are as follows:

(*Hir-di belt*): (i) Ramananda (1400?-1470); (ii) Vidyapathi (1350-1450); (iii) Kabir (1440-1518); (iv) Tulsidas (1532-1623); (v) Surdas (1479-1534); (vi) Rahim (Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan) (1556-1627); (vii) Raskhan (b. 1573); (viii) Nazir Akbarabadi (1735-1846); (*Maharashtra*); (ix) Namdeva (1270-1350); (x) Eknath (1548-1600); (xi) Tukaram (1598-1649); (xii) Ramads (1600-1681); (*Gujarat*); (xiii) Narsimha Mehta (1414-1481); (xiv) Akho (1615-1675); (*Bengal*): (xv) Chaitanya (1485-1533); (*Rajasthan*): (xvi) Dadu (1554-1603); (xvii) Mirabai (1547-1614); (*Punjab*): (xviii) Guru Nanak (1469-1539); (xix) Guru Arjan (1563-1606); (xx) Guru Govind (1666-1708); (xxi) Bullhe Shah (1680-1758); (*Sindh*): (xxi) Shah Abdul Latif (1689-1752); (*Assam*): (xxiii) Sankaradeva (1449-1558).

THEIR main thrust was to bring ancient wisdom to the commonfolk, by the message of love and amity couched in religious diction, which went home to the people. The song of Narsimha Mehta (1414-1481) defining a true Vaishnava (i.e. a Man of God) - one of the most favourite hymns used by Gandhiji in his prayer meetings - captures the ethos of the Bhakti idea:

He is a true Vaishnava (man of God) who feels the sufferings of others as his own/Ever ready to serve others who are in misery but never proud of the good

turn so done/ He bows to all and despises none; is always restrained in word, thought and deeds/ Blessed is the mother of such a one, who reveres the wife of another as a mother to himself/ He is equinamous and never speaks an untruth and never touches anyone's wealth/ He is above desire and attachment/ Ignorance never overpowers him.

His mind is full of the strong sense of detachment/ Ever in tune with the name of God (Rama) and, as such, all the places of pilgrimage reside in his body/ He is free from greed, deceit and fraud, and is without passion and anger/ This is the true Vaishnava/ Narasimha says. Even a sight of such a man is enough to save seventy-one generations from hell.

Most of the Bhakti saints attempted to harmonise the orthogenetic and the heterogenetic elements of the Great and the Little Traditions of both Hinduism and Islam. Their integrative approach generated an ethos of inter-group cordiality. But more than their poetry and *bhajans* (religious songs), what made an abiding impression on the poor, illiterate or semi-literate mass of people, comprising the peasant, the craftsman, the artisan, the trader, the village teacher, the small and middle functionary in services etc., was just their lives and life-styles. They lived what they preached. And precept had a lasting impression for those who came in contact, rather than the lofty principles that were enunciated. After all, they were not propounding a complex philosophy. Their direct, simple teaching in folk dialects and folk idiom, that human fraternity is 'one and indivisible' and hence should live in peace, with understanding, toleration and compassion despite apparent cleavages and varied imageries of religion, of culture, regarding God and truth and good life and social ethics, etc., went straight to the heart of the common people. The Bhakti saints became transmitters of the values of composite culture. They served the historic role, in that age of the dominance of religion as the axial principle of social life, of shifting the focus from doctrinal polemics, sometimes fought through physical combats and inter-group feuds, to the more enduring exercise of mutual appreciation and reciprocal respect for

the traditions and customs prevalent among different sects, castes and communities. To have raised their voices against established and entrenched orthodoxy, brahminic monopoly of knowledge, rigid caste hierarchy and social fragmentation; exclusive use of Sanskrit for rituals, learning and culture; was itself an act of revolutionary dissent and breakthrough which paved the way at the ideational level, for the unfolding of the pattern of composite culture.<sup>37</sup>

### **Representative Pioneers of Composite Culture in India**

Over the centuries, the vision of India and its civilizational ethos, reflecting humanism, compassion, tolerance of diversities, spirit of accommodation and synthesis, and the values and expressions of composite culture, found articulation in the life and strivings of a wide cross-section of our people — from rulers to saints, to poets and minstrels, artisans and craftsmen, social reformers and political activists. Some of the shining representatives in different epochs of India's long history, have been persons like the Mauryan emperor, Ashoka (268-232 BC); the Gupta emperor, Chandragupta Vikramaditya (AD 320-413); King Harshavardhana of Kanauj (606-648); the two Chola emperors Rajaraja Chola (985-1016) and Rajendra Chola (1016-1044); the three famous Chisti saints of India, namely the founder of the Chisti Sufi silsilah, Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chisti of Ajmer (1143-1234), whose *dargah* for centuries has been a place of veneration for diverse segments of people; Baba Farid (1175-1265), a humanist saint and a progenitor of Punjabi literature, revered for centuries by Hindus, Muslism and Sikhs, and Baba Farid's immediate successor namely Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (1236-1325), probably the greatest Indo-Muslim saint of all times, called *Mahboob-i-Ilahi* (beloved of the God), whose tomb to this day attracts congregation of all people belonging to different castes and creeds, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims; the poet, philosopher, musician, chronicler, sufi, and a pioneer of composite culture, Amir Khusrau (1253-1325); the dominant Bhakti saint and advaitist, a symbol of Hindu-

Muslim streams of consciousness, Sant Kabir (1398?/1400-1518); the poet Narasimha Mehta of Gujarat (1414-1481), whose famous bhajan 'Vaishnava Jana to' (a true Vaishnava) became part of Gandhiji's prayer meetings; the epitome of spiritual synthesis and the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak (1469-1539); one of the vital forces in the shaping of Bengali religious consciousness and literature, the Krishna-bhakta, Chaitanya (1485-1533); the progenitor of Din-e-Ilahi and an early promoter of national unity, the Moghul emperor Akbar (1542-1605); a pioneer of Hindi poetry, a Krishna-devotee and promoter of Hindu-Muslim cordiality, Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khanan (1556-1627); the founder of Hyderabad, romantic poet-king, patron of arts and a symbol of composite culture, Quli Qutub Shah (1565-1611); the intellectual Moghul crown prince, humanist and Sufi, Persian translator of Upanishads, an early martyr in the cause of composite culture, Dara Shikuh (1615-1659); a well-loved Sindhi-Sufi saint and poet whose songs are cherished alike by Hindus and Muslims, Shah Abdul Lateef (1688-1752); social reformer, founder of Brahmo Samaj, a man of enlightenment, Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833); the creative Urdu poet, heretic, humanist, Mirza Asadullah Khan 'Ghalib' (1797-1869); educationist, social reformer, modernizer Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898); the nationalist-pioneer, economist, parliamentarian Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917); fierce freedom fighter, the proponent of 'Swaraj is my birthright' slogan, Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920); the dynamic religious exponent, Vedantist, founder of the Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902); the epitome of Bengal renaissance, poet, philosopher, musician, humanist Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941); the political reformer, patriot, founder of the 'Servants of the People Society,' Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915); the creative leader of the national movement, saintly humanist, the outstanding symbol of India's struggle for freedom, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948); the seer, poet, exponent of Indian philosophical heritage, Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950); the nightingale of the freedom movement, poetess, embodiment of composite culture, Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949); people's poet, freedom fighter, humanist and a continuator of Tamils great heritage of Indian patriotism,

Subramania Bharati (1882-1921); the brilliant intellectual, interpreter of the Islamic heritage, upholder of composite nationalism, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958); the builder of secular polity, democratic culture and modern Indian identity, Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964); and the crusader for equality and human rights, for a casteless society, the architect of our Constitution, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1893-1956).

THE ideational commonality in all of them, divided by centuries but united by vision and compassion can be perceived in their transcendental passion to overcome the prejudices of their caste, class and creed and reach out to all sections of their fellowmen and women with equal love and loyalty in order to promote the composite culture in India. Indeed it is this composite culture in India, which remains a valuable input into the flowering of a new world of creative diversity and pluralism which is united by larger humanistic concerns, for building a new civilization on the planet based on justice, equality, dignity and universal prosperity.

### **Notes and References**

\* According to conventional knowledge the term *Sufi* is derived from four possible sources. (i) from the Arabic word, pronounced *Soof* (*Sufi*) which literally means 'wool', referring to the material from which the simple and coarse robes of the early Muslim mystics were made, (ii) from *Ashab-e-Suffa* (companions of the platform), that is those pious, poor and ascetic companions of the Prophet, who congregated and lived on the platform of the 'Masjid-e-Nabwi' (the mosque of the Prophet) at Madina, in AD 623 and were later recognized as the first Sufis in Islam, (iii) from the Arabic word *Safwa* (piety) to denote the clean, righteous and pious behaviour of true men of God, and (iv) from the Greek root, *Sophia* (divine wisdom), which was later corrupted and applied to pretenders of knowledge (the *sophists*) denounced by Socrates in the famous aphorism: 'I know that I do know, you do not know that you do not know'. Some interpreters, seek to trace its origin to the Hebrew cabbalistic (i.e. mystic term) *Ain Sof* (the absolute infinite).

In *Kashf ul-Mahjub* (Revelation of the Veiled) the venerable saint, Shaik Ali Hujwiri, Data Gunj Baksh of Lahore (11th Century AD) specifically states that *Sufi* has no etymology (see R.A. Nicholson's translation of the book, London, 1911, p. 34). But this is disputed by others.

1. Albert Einstein, *The World as I see it* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1935) pp. 23-28.
2. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Religions* (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1985) pp. 9-17.
3. Excerpts from N.L. Gupta, ed., *Nehru and Communalism* (New Delhi: Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee, 1965) pp. 99-114.
4. See: Syeda Saiyidain Harneed, ed.; *India's Maulana: Abul Kalam Azad* (New Delhi, 1990), in Two Volumes - Vol. I: Articles on Azad, Vol. II: Selections from his Writings and Speeches (translated in English). Also: Rasheeduddin Khan, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Personality Politics and Message* (New Delhi: 1989) in Urdu-including selected Writings and Speeches) and *Maulana Azad: A Multi-faceted Personality* (An edited volume of 39 essays in Urdu) (New Delhi, 1989).
5. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1982) 2nd ed. Mohanlal Roy Choudhry, *The Din-i-Ilahi* (New Delhi: Oriental Reprint, 1985) Edward E. Sachau, ed., *Alberuni's India* (New Delhi: Oriental Reprint, 1983); Ishfaq Husain Qureshi, *Akbar. the Architect of Mughal Empire* (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat, 1987).
6. Abul Kalam Azad, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1964) (Four volumes in Urdu), and Syed Abdul Lateef, (tr.) *Basic Concepts of the Quran* (Hyderabad: Academy of Islamic Studies, 1958).
7. Translation from Urdu, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* Vol. I (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1964) pp. 458-460.
8. For perspective surveys of Indian History, see the following-R.C. Mazumdar, H.C. Raychaudri and K.K. Datta, *An Advanced History of India* (London, 1950) Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India* (New York, 1946); K.M. Panikkar, *A Survey of Indian History* (Bombay, 1947); H.G. Rowlinson, *India. A Short Cultural History* (London, 1952); Percival Spear, *India, Pakistan and the West* (New York, 1967); A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India* (New York, 1954); I.S.S. O'Malley, *Modern India and the West A Study of the Interaction of their Civilizations* (London, 1941); H.N. Sinha, *The Development of Indian Polity* (Bombay, 1963)
9. See in this connection, K.A. Nizami, ed., *Politics and Society during the Early Mediaeval Period: Collected Works of Professor Mohammad Habib*, Vol. I (Delhi, 1974).
10. For issues connected with socio-cultural diversities see: Bernard S. Cohn, *India: The Social Anthropology of a Civilization* (New Jersey, 1971), David G. Mendelbaum, *Society in India*, 2 vols. (Berkeley, 1970), McKim Marriott, ed., *Village India: Studies in the Little Community* (Chicago, 1955); Milton B. Singer, ed., *Introduction to the Civilization of India: Changing Dimensions of Indian Society and Culture* (Chicago, 1957) and Milton B. Singer and Bernard S. Cohn, eds., *Structure and Change in Indian Society* (Chicago-1968); M.N. Srinivas, *Castes in Modern India and Other Essays* (Bombay, 1962) and *Social Change in Modern India* (Berkeley, 1968) and Yogendra Singh, *Modernization of Indian Tradition* (Delhi, 1973).

11. See: Rasheeduddin Khan, ed., *Composite Culture of India and National Integration* (Shimla, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1986).
  12. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India* (New York, 1946) pp. 52-53.
- The word *Dharma* may connote such different attributes, or a mix of these, like (i) law proper, (ii) religion, (iii) custom, (iv) usage, (v) duty, (vi) virtue, (vii) morality, (viii) piety, (ix) righteous conduct, (x) propriety, (xi) conformity to rules, (xii) justice, (xiii) innate property , and (xiv) quality.
13. See: S. Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, eds. *A Source Book of Indian Philosophy* (New Jersey, 1957) XVII-XXII, 37, 506-9; Says: 'The Upanishads are the concluding portions of the Vedas and the basis for the Vedantic philosophy, 'a system in which human speculation seems to have reached its very acme', according to Max Mueller, the Upanishads have dominated Indian philosophy, religion and life for nearly three thousand years'. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (Centenary Edition) (In Two Vols) (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991). Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (In Five Volumes) (Delhi: Motilal Banarsiidas, 1988) Reprint. S. Radhakrishnan, *Hindu View of Life*, 8th imp., (London, 1949) 22-23. Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* 1954) 18. The eight-fold path of Buddhist *Dhamma* that made an impact, consisted of: right views (samyak drsti), right thoughts (samyak sankalpa) right speech (samyak vaca), right action (samyak karman), right living (samyak sjiva), right exertion (samyak vyayama), right recollection (samyak smrta), right meditations (samyak samadhi).
  14. Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* (Allahabad, 1954) pp. 1-16.
  15. ibid , and Krishna Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement: A New Perspective* (A Study in the History of Ideas) (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1987).
  16. Tara Chand, n. 14, p.ix.
  17. See: Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London, 1967), Najibullah, *Islamic Literature* (New York, 1963). Idries Shah, *The Way of the Sufi* (Penguin, 1968).
  18. Hitti, n. 17, pp. 432-4; and Tara Chand, n. 14, pp. 62-7; Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah, *Islamic Sufism* (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat, 1979) Reprint.
  19. R.A. Nicholson, "Mysticism" in Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume, eds.., *The Legacy of Islam* (London, 1947) p. 215.
  20. Nicholson, ibid., p. 216 and Najibullah, n. 17, p.151.
  21. Nicholson, n. 19, p. 224; Hitti, n.17, pp. 585-588: Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (New York, 1968) pp. 148-76, 230-48, and Tara Chand, n. 14, pp. 73-8.
  22. Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London, 1948) p. 443; and Hitti, n. 17, pp. 557-90.
  23. Hitti, n. 17, p. 558.
  24. Najibullah, n. 17, p. 278, and Idries Shah, n. 17, pp. 107-9.
  25. Nicholson, n. 19, p. 229; Najibullah, n. 17, p. 305.

26. See the systematic work in Urdu, Khaliq Ahmed Nizami, *Tarikh-Mashaiq-i Chist* (History of the Mystic Shaikhs of Chist), (Delhi, 1950) 142, quoting Mir Khurd, *Siyar-ul-Aulia*, and Yusuf Hussain, *Glimpses of Mediaeval Indian Culture* (Bombay, 1973) pp. 31-7; and P.M. Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-din Chishti of Ajmer* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).
27. Nizami, ibid., p. 133; Von Hammer in reference to the *tariqs* or Sufi orders say that the following existed before the foundation of the Ottoman Empire (1453): (i) Uwaisi, (ii) Ilwani, (iii) Adhami, (iv) Bustami, (v) Saqati, (vi) Qadiri, (vii) Rifai, (viii) Suhrawardi, (ix) Kubrawi, (x) Shazli, (xi) Maulvi, (xii) Badwai, cf. Aziz Ahmed, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 223-224. He refers to the following as prevalent in India in the 16th century, by citing Abul Fazl, namely, Habibi, Junaidi, Tusi, Chisti, Naqbandi, Firdausi, Karkhi and Saqati - the latter including the Jews and the Christians. 'The Tayfui were influenced by Upanishadic and Vedantic metaphysics, and the founder of the Kaziruni sect, Abu Ishaq ibn Shahryar, was a convert, from Zorastrianism'. Paul Jackson, S.J., *The Way of a Sufi: Sharfuddin Maveri* (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat, 1987).
28. Nizami, n. 26, pp. 150-155. Kshitrimohan Sen, *Mediaeval Mysticism in India* (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1974).
29. The original Persian verse is: Kushtagan-i Khanjare taslim ra/Har Zamān as ghaib Jane digar ast.
30. Yusuf Husain, n. 26, p.60. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-uddin Ganj-i-Shakar* (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat, 1987) Reprint.
31. Professor Mohammad Habib in K.A. Nizami, ed., *Politics and Society during the Early Mediaeval Period. Collected Works of Professor Mohammad Habib* Vol. I (Delhi, 1974) p. 356. See also: Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya* (Delhi, 1991).
32. ibid.; Habib, p. 23, Amir Khusrau, *Duwal Rani Khazir Khan* (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat, 1988) (With Introduction and Notes by Khaliq Ahmad Nizami). Muhammad Rafiq Abid, *Masnavi Nuh-Sepehar (Amir Khusrau)* (New Delhi: Maktaba Jamia Ltd., 1979) (In Urdu). *Life, Times and Works of Amir Khusrau Dehlavi* (Compilation of the Seventh Centenary National Amir Khusrau Society, 1974). Mohammad Wahid Mirza, *The Life and Works of Khusrau* (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat, 1974) Reprint. See: *Amir Khusrau Memorial Volume* (Delhi, 1975), and the Urdu book, Syed Sahabuddin Abdur Rahman, *Hindustan Amir Khusrau ki Nazar Main* (India in the eyes of Amir Khusrau) (Azamgarh, 1966).
33. See Professor Habib's brilliant essay, "Shaikh Nasiruddin Mahmud Chiragh-i-Delhi, a great historical personality", in Habib, n. 331, pp. 356-84 See also: Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya* (Delhi, 1991).
34. Habib, n. 31, p. 380.

35. Yusuf Hussain, n. 26, p. 39. Syed Shah Khusro Hussaini, *Sayyid Muhammad Al-Husayini-Gisudiraz On Sufism* (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat, 1983).
36. A.K. Majumdar, *Bhakti Renaissance* (Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1979)
37. See. V. Raghavan, *The Great Integrators The Saint Singers of India* (New Delhi, 1964); and *Cultural Leaders of India Devotional Poet Mystics* (In two parts) New Delhi: Publications Division, 1981) Reprint. Jonn Stratton Hawley and Marc Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India* (New York Oxford, 1988) □



# **SUMMARIES**



# The Metaphysical Significance of the Sufi Stations

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A'avani Gholam Reza

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ONE of the most important issues in Sufism is the spiritual state and stations attained by Sufis at various stages of life. A Sufi station (*Maqam*) is a state of realization attained by Sufis according to the extent of their worship, self-negation and spiritual concentration or meditation. On the other hand, *Haal* or spiritual state is what one feels deeply through divine inspiration. Thus, we see that while stations are acquired through spiritual exercise, states are gifts of God. Stations are permanent in this world and in the hereafter, whereas states are ephemeral, sudden and fleeting in nature, changing from moment to moment. There is a constant ascension from one spiritual state to another, still higher, and more perfect.

A station is pre-ordained by God according to a Sufi's action and He Himself establishes him in it so that he can see it and contemplate in it.

ANOTHER factor is that there are stages of stations and one cannot reach the higher stage without fulfilment of the previous station. Thus, the first station is repentance, then conversion, renunciation, trust in God and so on—in a definite order.

THESE stations are not mere concepts in the mind of the seeker, but solid states of realization. They are states of being, or degree of consciousness. Thus, they lead the Sufi, by stages, to the ultimate union with Divinity. One can see it as a voluntary death of worldly desires, passion, and a re-birth in a new Divine life—to be resurrected by God Himself. This is the highest state one can achieve.

IN Sufism, Man is considered as the most perfect manifestation of God. He embodies in his self all the Divine attributes and perfection. He is the goal and ultimate end of creation. He is the intermediary between God and His created order. Man is made in the image of God. He shares all the names or attributes of God, but whereas God is perfect, man *acquires* perfection. The only attribute that separates God from man, is, the intrinsic self-sufficiency of God, and the dependency and poverty of man. This theomorphic nature of man (man made in the image of God) allows him to share knowledge, wisdom, and other attributes of perfection with God, but God *is* these perfections, and man *has* them.

MAN, in the Sufi view, is the total manifestation of Divine Attributes, and so in him knowledge becomes total. The Sufi path can be described as the upward journey of the soul through different stations of realization to the ultimate union with God. Thus, the two semi-circles of descent of man and his ascent through Sufi path become joined through him. At each station of realization man acquires one more attribute, or name of God. But God and man have two different functions vis-a-vis these attributes or names. Man acquires or 'performs' these attributes and God receives them or *is* them.

Now we come to the significance of Sufi stations, i.e. their spiritual virtues. A spiritual virtue is the consciousness of a reality. The metaphysical foundation of a spiritual value is not confined to the intellect but is reflected in action at the plane of human will. Intellect, knowledge and the will together constitute the metaphysical foundation of spiritual virtues—which are nothing but Divine Qualities realized in us.

FOR every basic truth there is corresponding attitude of will. *To know is to be.* The important foundation of spiritual virtues is really the

interaction between knowledge and will. Since these metaphysical truths are the Divine Qualities, this means that the spiritual stations in Sufism are inseparable from spiritual or Divine Virtues. Moreover, virtues are not extraneous accidents of the soul, but they constitute the very essence of the man and by their acquisition one's self is transformed into a higher stage or reality. Acquiring a Sufi station is acquiring a virtue, which manifests a Divine Quality. It takes one into a higher state of perfection till such time that he reaches the highest and ultimate stage which is unity with God.

There is no consensus about enumerating the different stations of Sufism and their order of succession. It is said to vary from six to one hundred. But, in the ultimate analysis there are three levels of one's being, the *soul*, the *heart*, and the *spirit*. The ultimate aim of traversing all the various stations of Sufism is to free one's *heart*, to elevate the *soul* from the worldly or carnal, and to achieve the *spirit*'s ascent to ultimate union with God. □



# Saint and its Synonymous Quranic Words

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Syed Manal Shah Alquadri

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**S**AINt is a Latin word. It stands for a holy person, eminent for piety and virtue. The Islamic term for Saint is *Vali* and *Sufi*. The definition of Saints, their position in this world and hereafter are mentioned in Quran and Hadith. God has chosen in the Holy Quran words like *Auliya Allah*, *Salihin*, *Fugara* etc. to denote the Saint. I shall deal with these words one by one.

**V**ALI : In the Holy Quran, God says, 'Beware, the friends of God shall have no fear nor they grieve.' *Auliya* is the plural of *Vali*. *Vali Allah* means friend of God, one who has intense love for God, devotion to Him and seeks His utmost nearness.

THE Holy Prophet once said, '*Vali* is a person whose sight recalls the memory of God' (*Al Kashshaf*, Vol. II, Egypt., 1375 A.H. p. 243). On another occasion he said that friends of God are the persons whom you will find always busy in the remembrance of God (*Tafsir-Ibn Kathir* (Urdu Trans.), Deoband, Ch: II).

SAIYID Qutbi in his commentary (*Fi-Zalal ul Quran*. Vol. III p. 45) says that '*Auliya Allah* have neither grief nor fear . . . , in every

action, every pose, every motion, every halt, God is with them . . . . they are always drowned in the memory of God.'

SOME Saints observe that *Valayat* (sainthood) is the state of nearness of God and dedication to Him.

**FAQIR :** In the Holy Quran, God has used the word *Faqir* for human beings and *Ghani* for Himself. He says, 'O men, you are they who stand in need of *Allah* and *Allah* is He who is self-sufficient, the praised One' (*Quran* XXXV: 16). In another verse he says, '*Faqirs* are confined in the path of Allah. They do not beg from men importunately' (*Quran* II. 37: 273). Shaikh Hujwari thinks *faqir* is not that person whose hand is empty of wealth and money but one whose nature is free from greed. (*Kashf-al Mahjub*. Urdu Tr. p. 56. cf. *Fawaaidul Fawaaid*, p.9).

**SALIH :** Saiyid Mohammad Naimuddin says 'They (*Salih*) are the religious persons who perform the duty of God (*Al-Quranul Azim*, p. 105). While explaining the word *Salih* Maulana Azad states, 'The path of those Thou hast favoured' (*Tarjumanul Quran*). In the Quran, God Himself says, 'They believe in Allah and the last day and they enjoy what is right and forbid the wrong and they strive with one another in hastening the good deeds and are of the righteous.' (*Quran*, Ch. IV. 9 : 69, Ch. III. 12 : 112).

**SUFI:** Eight words are given by different scholars as the source of the word Sufi. 1. *Safa*, meaning purity of the heart, 2. *Saff Awwal*, meaning first row of the faithful, 3. *Banu Safa*, name of a Bedouin tribe, 4. *Ahl-e Suffa*, section of devotees who during the time of the Prophet were engaged in devotional acts in the mosque of the Prophet at Medina, 5. *Sufana*, name of a vegetable, 6. *Safwat-al-Kifa*, lock of hair at the nape of the neck, 7. *Sophia*, a Greek word meaning wisdom or philosophy, and 8. *Suf*, meaning wool.

THE author of the oldest Arabic treatise on Sufism, Abu Nasr-al-Saraj declares that the word Sufi is derived from *Suf*, for the woollen raiment is the habit of the Prophet and the badge of the Saints. Khaliq

Ahmed Nizami, also affirms this idea (*Tarikh e-Mashaikh e Christ*)

We have many other Quranic words like, *Siddique Muttaqqi Momin* which could have been used for Saint

**Siddiqi** About the *Siddiques* God says 'And whosoever obeys Allah and the Apostle, these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the prophets and the truthful and faithful and the righteous and a goodly company are they' (Quran, Ch IV 9 69)

**Muttaqqi** The word means God fearing and pious 'Verily, among you he is honourable who is pious before God'

**Momin** In the true sense of faithful *Momin* is also a meaningful word B *Momin* Allama Iqbal refers to that person who possesses miraculous power he says

A glance from the *mard i momin* changes destinies

Thus we find that the Quranic dictionary has many words which are more or less equivalent to the word Saint Instead of using these words the copious use of the word Sufi which is not a Quranic word, has created doubt in the minds of some orientalists about the Quranic origin of Sufism □



# Sufism: Definition, History and Relevance in the Contemporary World

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Mohammad Usman Arif

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DURING the lifetime of the Prophet, there had emerged a group among his companions, who were not only well versed in Shariat and learning but were also immersed in prayers and supplication to achieve qualities of negation and purification of heart and soul. They also tried to draw the attention of other followers to adopt the same values. Besides the four faithful friends of the Prophet, there were other men whose hearts were illuminated by his divine light and qualities. The distinguished descendants of the men of Shariat and Tariqat, theology and Sufism, have all been the followers of the Prophet. These great Sufis have served mankind with great devotion and single-mindedness without any prejudice of caste and religion. They preached the value of love, humanity, equality, and righteousness, mercy and forgiveness, sincerity, sympathy, graciousness, humility and charity not only in words but by their own examples and deeds.

HAZRAT Junaid Baghdadi defines mysticism as 'Another name for correct thinking'. Ibn ul Samak thinks, 'Sufism is to give up falsehood and adopt sincerity'. It is this sincerity of faith and deed that is termed

*ehsan* (beneficence) in a Hadith. Shaikh Ali Qizwaini has defined Sufism as, 'The right conduct'. Another Sufi has called Sufism, building of character of inner and outer self. The Sufis dedicated their entire lives to the building and betterment of man's character and personality. This training was their mission, and they spent their whole life in improving the individual and, then, the betterment of society and the entire civilization around them. Those who were near and dear to these Sufis absorbed the sterling qualities of their *pirs*. According to the Sufis, good conduct and service to humanity is the true meaning of Sufism. Shaikh Abul Hasan says that, 'Sufism is not a creed or custom, but an ethical value system. Thus, good conduct and service to humanity is the basic foundation of Sufism. The service to humanity should be universal and limitless. These qualities of the Sufi should be like a bottomless ocean which should contain all humanity alike, be they high or low, servant or master.'

THE history of medieval India is full of incidents of Sufi and Bhakti cult movements spearheaded by Sufis, saints and sants from all religions. They emphasized universal brotherhood, mutual love, trust and unity. The Chishti Sufis tried to unite people of all faiths in India. If one is to study the history of unity and fellow feeling in India, one would realize that it is part of our heritage. It is our duty to preserve it and encourage it, if we want to keep India united. Our leaders understood the need for this centuries-old tradition of love and unity and included it as secularism in our Constitution. They saw the need to respect all religions and bestow equal rights on people of all creeds by making it a law. Unfortunately, the law of the land has not yet achieved what the Sufi saints had achieved by conquering hearts and influencing the minds of the people. □

# The Spiritual Thoughts of Sufism

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Majida Asad

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**A**SUFI is not just one who wears woollen clothes. He does not renounce the world. What is important is that he possesses the qualities of a *Darvesh* rather than the appearance of one. It is his way of thinking which is more important rather than his way of life. According to Dr Tara Chand, 'Sufism is a complex phenomenon which gathers volume by joining the tributaries from many lands. Its original source is the Quran and the life of the Prophet. Christianity and Neo-Platonism swelled it by larger contribution. Hinduism and Buddhism supplied a number of ideas, and the religions of Ancient Persia brought to it their share.' Again, he says, 'Sufism indeed was a religion of intense devotion, love was its passion; poetry, song and dance its worship and passing away in God its ideal.'

IMAM Abu Bakr bin Abu Ishaq says, 'Sufis are those whose hearts are clear for God to live in it and the reward he gets from God is a spiritually clean old age.' A Sufi is neither a master of someone nor is a servant of anyone. Worldly pleasures have not made him their slave. Mystic experience is present in all religions of the world. In Sufism, character

building is important. It is an effort to end the conflict between what you say and what you do; what you are and what you project. Lastly, it tries to end conflicts that have arisen due to caste and creed.

A Sufi derives his strength from the medium of love. It is a penance of a very high order. It leads to the way of enlightenment. Hazrat Usman Baghdadi said that Sufism is living and dying for God. Hazrat Dhunnoor Misri said, 'A Sufi is one whose speech reflects truth. In his silence, each and every pose of his body should reflect his renunciation from worldly pleasures.' Imam Abul Hasan has said that Sufism is the name of a particular character. It means the ability to conquer greed, slavery and lust. Sufism deals with the inner life and the heart is its symbol of love. Sufis do not consider the soul to be temporary or momentary; it is embodied in every particle of the universe. The question is to traverse the distance between the soul and the universe.

A Sufi sees God in everything. Whatever we see, feel, and taste is all temporary. It is God who is supreme, there is nothing outside the circle of God. To lead the life of a Sufi, one should have the patience and ability to understand God. Only then will one be able to defeat the feeling of pride and jealousy. Sufis never boast about their personality. They do not believe in taking; only in giving whatever alms come to them. Their share is very small. Most of it is distributed among orphans, destitutes and the people who visit. They only want to spread, among the people, the internal light and the godly strength they have acquired. □

# Tazkira-e-Tasawwuf and Nisbat-e-Sufia

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Mohammad Amirullah Asadi

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**S**UFISM or *Tariqat* is the embodiment of *shariat* and *sunnat*. Its aim is to build inner and outer qualities of man, to cleanse him of all sins, and develop a strong character according to the doctrine of religion.

BOTH Nepal and India have been centres for Sufis, Sadhus, Dervish and Rishis. Both countries have a great bond of similar culture, civilisation, caste and creed. Our relationship goes back centuries in tradition. It is very important at this crucial time to strengthen this bond and develop good international relations among people of all nations.

## The History of the Evolution of Sufism

SUFISM appeared with great aplomb during the first decade of the spread of Islam. Its aim was to teach good conduct, purification of self, cultivation of a religious disposition and development of thought.

It taught and familiarized people with the doctrine of religion and *shariat*.

In Islam, there is the Prophet, then his friends (*Ashab-e-Rasool*); his followers, their followers and sub-followers who took pride in having the proximity of the Prophet. People got divided into many sects after the death of the Prophet, and each group started calling itself *Ahl-e-Sunnat* (the real followers). Then came Hazrat Maulana Abdul Qadir Jilani and other great persons who called themselves Sufis. Thus, Sufism was established before the third century A.H. There was great opposition to Sufis from narrow-minded and dogmatic religious leaders who referred to them as non-believers. The Sufis established their *khanqahs* and renounced the world. In their quiet corners they started their teaching and service to mankind, and finally a large number of enlightened people became their followers.

### **The Most Important Aim of Sufism**

It is very important for a Sufi to have inner qualities of goodness as well as outer qualities of piety. This helps him to become a true disciple of God (*Abdul Allah*). A Sufi teaches that man by conquering his 'self' can reach a state where nothing but the love of God remains. A true Sufi needs three essential qualities to reach God; to purge his heart of all doubt, to have good conduct, and not to become negligent. Through these three virtues man can achieve proximity and love of God. Then his heart will be purged of all evil values of lust, greed, falsehood and ill feelings towards fellow beings and he can be content. He thus has a self which is perfect and in tune with God's will. Hence we see that Sufism is the real essence of *shariat*.

### **The Social Significance of Sufism**

If Sufism had not bestowed the true code of conduct and moral

values to humanity and familiarized people with ethical and moral qualities in simple terms, there could not have been any love, unity and amity among people of different faiths, religions and denominations. The benediction of Sufis is bestowed equally on all people, no matter what their colour, creed or status.

THE Sufis have their own distinctive characteristics. They imbibe in themselves the qualities of conduct and the moral values that they teach. This is done with beauty and perfection, and it not only becomes exemplary but leaves a great impact on the heart and mind of men, so much so that everyone believes it to be his or her own idea. These Sufis are the real followers of the Prophet, and are necessary for civilization; otherwise there could be total neglect of religion, a great deal of strife, and the lack of any moral code. There are many examples in history of the good deeds of Sufis.

IT is imperative in the world today to follow the principles and teachings of these Sufis. Only by following their example and advice about unity, brotherhood, godliness, and service and their criteria of good conduct, can we ever hope to develop goodwill and love among people and nations in our world. □



# **Origin, Development and Main Characteristics of Chishti Sufis with Special Reference to Syed Ashraf Jahangir**

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**S. Wahid Ashraf**

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**T**HE Chishti spiritual order originated from Chisht, a city in Khorasan. Khwaja Abu Ishaq Shami, who came to Chisht from Syria, initiated Khwaja Abu Ahmad Abdal who originated the order. This spiritual order flourished in Iran until Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti came to India and settled in Ajmer. Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti founded the order in India and taught and trained his disciples who propagated the cult of Chishti order. The main characteristic of the order and its distinctive features have been thus stated by Syed Ashraf Jahangir, a great Chishti Sufi of 8th century: 'They build houses in the cities and villages. They preach and show the right path to the people. They are independent of the world and the worldly people. They have arduous spiritual practices. They live on scanty food. They like to be in the company of the poor and eat meals with them. They are fond of *sama*. They celebrate the *urs* of the holy men. They pay more respect to the poor than they do to the rich. Those who become their disciples give up the love of the world. He, who is initiated in the Chishti order, has a heavenly character and is above worldly gain. He adheres strictly to the laws of *Shariah* and remembers at all times the name of Allah. He behaves well

with every one regardless of religion, and status.'

AMONG the Chishti Sufis, Khwaja Moinuddin was the greatest lover of humanity and had profound sympathy for all men. He used to pray 'O Allah! Where there is pain give it to me.' He could not see anyone in pain. He told his disciples to help the helpless, to fulfil the needs of the needy and feed the hungry. After Khwaja Moinuddin, his great disciples and Caliphs spread the teachings of the order. Chishti Sufis were believers in Monism; the concept of unity of existence played a great role in infusing the sense of unity of humanity, which can be said to be a great cause of Hindu-Muslim unity in the past. Chishti Sufis guided people of all strata through their actions, words and writings. Among the Chishti Sufis, Syed Ashraf Jahangir is very distinguished for the role he played in the amelioration of society and spreading peace and justice. He laid emphasis on service to humanity. He said that an idle man is the most worthless of all; those who are engaged in some constructive work are in service of humanity. People who are engaged in agriculture and other occupations are doing commendable and virtuous deeds. Allah has created the world and He wants it to flourish and prosper, so that all the creatures may be benefited. He never advised his disciples to abandon worldly affairs. He said that nothing is as great a sin as to inflict pain on others. Syed Ashraf was greatly concerned with the economic problems of the people. Since the tasks related to compassion, sympathy and philanthropy have increased, the whole day and night cannot be spent on supererogatory prayers, like that practiced by the early Sufis. Chishti Sufis practice no discrimination among mankind on the basis of nationality, religion, country, caste and colour. They preach tolerance, patience, forgiveness and love for all. □

# Iqbal and Sufism

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Jagan Nath Azad

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**T**HE impression that Iqbal is opposed to Sufism is not true. Iqbal's wrath is directed against religious formalism and its dogmas. He raises his voice against an attitude of surrender and blind acceptance of the doctrine of destiny, and against inaction.

THEY were a great uproar when Iqbal wrote his book *Asrar-e-Khudi* and *Rumuz-e-Bekhudi*. He was accused of being anti-Sufism. In this book he has lashed out an attack on Hafiz Shirazi for his preaching of passiveness and inactivity. His main objection was to a particular brand of Sufism prevalent in Persia which, despite producing poets of great merit, advocated pessimism, and had a depressing and degenerating effect on the reader. According to Iqbal, Sufism gives strength and vitality to the heart and soul and invigorates the mind. His concept of Sufism is that it should function as a fountain-head of courage, heroism, and self-sacrifice and not as a source of resignation and inactivity. He draws a line between *genuine* and *artificial* Sufism. According to him, genuine Sufism helps in shaping and directing the evolution of religious experience in Islam while

artificial Sufism is incapable of receiving any fresh inspiration from thought and experience. He refuses to accept that Sufi orders should only be ascetic, world-neglecting and life-destroying. According to him they should be dynamic, inspired by spiritual vision, and should aim at evolving a civilization which is socially just, aesthetically beautiful, and spiritually integrated.

IQBAL, while criticising Persian fatalistic thought and passive resignation to God's will, advocates the combination of bold action and acceptance of the will of God. He talks of the difference between the prophetic and mystic types of experience. A mystic, when he returns from his experience, does not do much for mankind. Whereas the prophet's awakening creates earth-shaking psychological forces within him, calculated to transform the world, creating a fresh world of ideas.

IQBAL's approach to genuine Sufism is very much in keeping with his own philosophy of self and bold action. Thus, he does not discriminate between a Muslim and non-Muslim. For him, acceptance of the will of God, coupled with bold action is the essence of Sufism. Resignation to the will of God, if it means mere passive acceptance, to him is un-Islamic. Thus, he regards Lord Krishna as a great personality and a man of God, since he advocated that passivity is not renunciation of action, since action is inherent in human nature and forms the basis of life. Renunciation, according to Krishna, means that one should remain unconcerned with the result of the action. This is in keeping with Iqbal's own philosophy of Islamic Sufism.

ISLAM brought a great message of *action* in West Asia, believing that *ego* or *self-worth* is a self-created quality, and can be immortalised through action. In this respect, there is a great resemblance between the intellectual history of Hindus and Muslims. There was a time when Persian poets saw pantheism, as part of Islamic thought. Iqbal went along with this philosophy to some extent but in his later years, and in his last book, he wrote about removing mankind from the state of wretchedness and to lead it towards a state of blessedness. He

claims that the human being is the noblest of all the creations of the Almighty, and his greatness lies in respecting his fellow beings and in love of mankind

Along with Iqbal's message of love and brotherhood, his poetry is infused with patriotism. He has also hit hard against Western Imperialism. He wants human beings, especially Muslims in India, to break the shackles of slavery, mindless imitation of the West, and to carve out their own destiny, follow their own path, and be free of all bonds. This reiterates his favourite theme, the greatness of mankind, and recognition of self worth. Here he dares to challenge God, and asks him,

If man is the ultimate goal of life what then is the  
limit of his search for new horizons? ■



# Distinguishing Characteristics of the Chishti Sufis

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Sam V. Bhajan

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THE Sufi movement developed in Persia and entered India after the Muslim conquests. The Sufi saints travelled from place to place and preached the message of love among the people of India. Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti founded the Chishtiya Order. The success of the Chishtiya Order was due to the fact that it knew how to adapt itself to the conditions and customs of the country. The early leaders of the Chishti Order were very learned. They found out the spiritual value of music and introduced it into their circle. A blending of Islamic and Hindu music began. The spiritual musical performances gave rise to *Qawwali* and *Urs* began to be celebrated. The Chishti Sufis, though admired by the kings, did not interfere in state affairs. They criticised any deviation from the high ideals set by the Prophet. The Chishti Sufis were on friendly terms with the Sufis belonging to other brotherhoods, and a spirit of extreme tolerance prevailed among different mystic orders. They were liberal in their outlook towards the non-Muslims. They never condemned them on the basis of their religion. They tried to attract them with their moral and spiritual qualities. Their doors were open for all. The system of

running a free kitchen for the needy without distinction of caste, creed or colour was a typical Chishti practice. Whatever they received in the way of money and other things, they never kept for themselves but spent in feeding the poor and meeting their needs.

**CHISHTI** Sufis were spokesmen of the public and through them the voice of the public reached the ears of their rulers. Due to Sufis, the Muslim society was morally and spiritually consolidated. The love of humanity is another Chishti characteristic. Ethical ideas were inculcated in the minds of the disciples. Missionary work was peaceful, based on the example, precept and spread of spiritual education. They were exponents of the doctrine of inner light and theology of the heart. For them, the value of a human being was higher than his religion or position in the society. The rich and the poor sat side by side and the message of equality and brotherhood was practised and followed.

**CHISHTI** Sufis did not lead a life of asceticism, and never lost touch with the realities of life. They never forgot the socio-moral aspects of life in the interest of spiritual exaltation and ecstasy. They had wives, children and household responsibilities from which they never shirked. In their monasteries the needy were satisfied, the hungry fed, and spiritually dejected comforted. They never visited the rulers or accepted high posts from them. Keeping away from the court and the king was a typical Chishti tradition. Thus Hindu-Muslim contact developed a new language, Urdu. The Chishti Sufis used Urdu in its earliest form while preaching before the general public. They did not write much because, considering themselves torch-bearers of principles of equality and justice, they proved these principles through their lives and personal example. □

# A Sufi Psychological Treatise from India

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William C. Chittick

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**I**T is surprising that a lot of attention is being paid to Sufism in America by people who know nothing of Islam. Sufi groups are expanding, Sufi books are read, and Sufi dancing is offered as a self-expanding course. This interest is part of a broader interest in anything that breaks with the mechanistic and scientific world view that has brought Western civilization to its present impasse.

THESE is a paradigm shift in Western approach to reality. Many in the West feel that the path of technological development which the modern world has taken, is suicidal, as it tends to worsen conditions rather than cure them. According to some of Islam's most fundamental teachings, everything in existence manifests the signs or light of God, the absolute reality. There are many attributes or names of God. Divine names describe not only His qualities, but also those of cosmic existence. Of all things in the universe only human beings manifest all of God's qualities. All positive qualities in the world are the reflection of God's nature.

A peaceful and harmonious world, one which is dominated by

all God's Divine qualities depends upon human actions and virtues. Human existence needs to be rooted in love and compassion, in correct moral order and virtuous living. Modern society seems to be cut off from its cosmic environment and Divine Reality. In the Sufi view of things, cosmic reality cannot be isolated from moral and spiritual order. A science that considers itself value-neutral pretends that ethics and morality have no direct relevance to its undertaking, so that science is ignorant. Nothing arises from ignorance but disorder and confusion and disintegration in moral terms. The current ecological crisis, in a wide sense, is merely the outward reflection of disharmony and disequilibrium on the plane of human understanding and moral action. Those who control our educational, national and international policies have no grasp of the real nature of things.

SUFISM offers a way out of this plight. It provides a means to rediscover the spiritual dimension of existence. In studying Indian Sufism one tends to seek wisdom and guidance and to understand one's situation, in order to save the world. Sufi psychological treatises address perennial realities that are available to anyone who will take the trouble to look inside himself. Western psychologists are attempting to recover the wisdom of the past and overthrow the mechanisation of man as a mere object of technical manipulation. Sufism has developed a profound understanding of the relationship of human psyche to every dimension of reality.

To illustrate this point let us look at the pscyhological theme of Abdul Jalil's treatise which reflects the ideas of many other earlier Sufis.

MUCH of the Sufi theoretical teaching has to do with the *invisible or the unseen dimension of the human being—that ambiguous something which fills the space between the human body and the essence of God*. These unseen realities are *Nafs* (soul), spirit, heart, intellect and mystery. They are defined so that they can be identified, experienced and strengthened by the faithful on the path of God. The climax

is reached with an integration of the diverse dimensions of the human reality into the Oneness of God.

THE manuscript under discussion here is *Ruh wa Nafs* which presents a visionary conversation between Soul and Spirit. The Soul calls itself the governing power of the whole universe, while the Spirit claims it is the power through which all things have life force, and within it all creatures find their rest and repose. The Soul is a follower of *Iblis*, the misguider, who claimed such great love for God that he refused to bow before His creation—the man. The Spirit says it follows the Prophet, who is the Khalifa and guide.

ABDUL Jalil's description of the spirit and soul reaffirms the well-known opposition of the ascending, luminous and angelic tendency of the human being, and the descending dark and Satanic tendencies. Hence it is a dialogue between Guidance and Misguidance, Prophet and Satan and many other important doctrinal issues in Sufism. The Soul here claims an absolute oneness with God which obliterates distinction within the Being *Wujud* and it maintains its own privileged identity with *Wujud*. Thereby, it says that distinction among things is sheer illusion, and Shariah is but a veil that misleads people. For those who are really enlightened follow their own inner light which is God himself.

THE Spirit protests that the plea of absolute oneness is only one of the many levels of *Wujud* and ignores the diversity of that Being or *Wujud*'s many self-manifestations. The necessity of Shariah follows from the reality of the cosmos and the distinction among levels. While the Soul talks of an individual type of spirituality shorn of the traditional supports, the Spirit takes up the case of the religious universe of Islam. Finally, it is proposed that the dispute between the two should be taken to a third entity which is, *Sirr* or mystery—a still more inward dimension of the human reality. Here we must remember the Sufi concept of the seven-layer hierarchy of the human being i.e. body, soul, spirit, heart, mystery, hidden and most hidden.

THEN follows a long discourse by Mystery in which the Soul is asked to negate itself and to undergo annihilation to achieve the inward oneness. It also warns the Spirit to free itself from love of form and abandon itself to God. Thus we see that the Spirit represents the dimension of the human reality that is able to see itself and its own limitation objectively, and to efface itself by self-transcendence, and rise beyond itself through affirmation of the other self. The Soul also sees itself as central and affirms its own right to exist, hence it sinks within itself in affirming its own reality. Finally, Mystery advises both to unite and become one; and, thus, together, they become Heart. Finding the gathering of all meanings in this Heart, Mystery pulls it to itself and becomes united with it.

YET, there is another innermost dimension of the human beings, the hidden, and the most hidden. Mystery is the centre of human consciousness, halfway between the darkness of body and the Infinite Light of God; having strengthened itself by joining the Soul and the Spirit dimension. Through the Soul it dissolves into the hidden light. Through Spirit it is identified with the inner light, and thus the ultimate union with God is achieved. In this Supreme Union every self-subsistent reality in the human being is negated only to be reaffirmed as God's self-disclosure.

IN conclusion, Abdul Jalil says that all this was actually his own imagined embodiment of unseen realities and concepts, since absolute truth lies in God's essence alone. □

# Sufism: History and Relevance in the Contemporary World: The Indonesian Experience to view the 21st Century

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Abdullah Ciptoprawiro

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**T**HE contemporary Indonesian experience has been influenced by indigenous Indonesian-Javanese, Indian-Hindustani, Buddhist, Muslim and Western cultures. It also has been affected by wisdom of the past and science of the present which enriches it so as to face the 21st century.

ISLAM was brought to Indonesia in the 1st century Hijra (AD 8th). There was already a highly developed Indonesian culture with an Indian base; with this background Islam was practiced exoterically (Shariat) as well as esoterically (Tariqat). By the 16th century (AD) Islam was in the ascendant both politically and culturally. Malay was the language of mysticism. In Javanese Islamic mysticism, a legalistic orthodoxy and a modernistic current could be distinguished. In the beginning, Islamic mysticism was most popular, and mystic books, songs, theatre, poetry and culture were evolved. Mystic philosophy has been discussed in many books of that period. All the knowledge and wisdom gained from the indigenous, Indian and Islamic cultures was synthesized into a syncretic unity—and all elements of these

three cultures were systematised and put together in a mosaic. The exoteric and esoteric elements were combined harmoniously forming the outer and inner sides of this mosaic. All this knowledge and wisdom is symbolised in *Wayang* plays (puppetry) which are famous and are used for ethical moral education.

As mentioned above, Islamic history can be divided in two movements:

- (1) Exoteric: From the Prophet through the four Khalifas and all the religious leaders and saints.
- (2) Esoteric: Spiritual or inner history, through the Sufis from 8th to 16th centuries and onward.

ONE of the questions raised is whether Sufism had its origin in Islam or was an implant. Many verses in the Quran lend themselves to the esoteric reflections and practices, suggesting that Sufism is inherent in Islam. Some verses of the Quran are clear and imperative; while others are allegorical and symbolic. A symbol reveals levels of reality which otherwise are concealed. This symbolic interpretation is also found in Javanese literature. In Javanese *Wayang* performance we see many examples of the integration of the indigenous - Javanese, Indian and Islamic cultures and also references to mysticism and use of symbols.

Now we come to *Zikr* or Divine remembrance of Allah. This leads man to the unseen spiritual world. It is not only mentioning of the names and praise to Allah, but a systemetized and standardized practice which can be performed individually or collectively. It is also a way of meditation.

THE structure of personality or the image of man can be said to have a universal pitcture. We may say that a man has a three dimensional structure of personality, with three in-born facul!ties of thinking, feeling, and living within a three-dimensional universe or life environment.

THE three-dimensional structure of personality is in spirit, soul and body; and that of life—environment is spiritual—supernatural, psycho-social and physio-biological. From the different cultural elements we can derive three systems of values.

I. *Spiritual - Religious Life:*

- (a) Transcendent Values: Perfection, Unity, Nirvana, Ma'rifat and Suniyat.
- (b) Existent Values: Religions, Beliefs, Philosophy, Faith, Truth, Justice, Ethics, Aesthetics.

II. *Psycho-Social Life:*

Ceremonies, Art, Language, Science, Family, Tradition, Social Organisation, Politics, Economy.

III. *Material Life:*

Material Values from the benefit of Science and Technology.

ALL these cultural elements and systems of value can also be formulated within the context of philosophy and its branches. A definition of philosophy as experienced in Indonesian culture is: 'Philosophy is the art of wondering — that is, man's effort to gain understanding and knowledge of life in its wholeness, making full use of his in-born faculties of thinking, feeling and willing.'

WE are now in the last decade of 20th century. The tremendous progress of science and technology has made globalisation of the world possible. Western values are dominating the world. Many developing countries are searching for their own identity. Many Muslims are questioning the vitality, validity and relevance of Islamic values in the modern world. They are struggling between the choice of Islam as an ideology or as a religion — a choice between Nationalism and Islam.

With the proclamation of independence in 1945, Indonesia has

made its choice, nationalism based on the belief in God and freedom to practise Islam exoterically or esoterically.

THUS we can summarize the Indonesian experience:

- (1) Practice of Sufism as an integration of all cultures.
- (2) *Zikr* as the path of Sufism (meditation).
- (3) Symbolism of aesthetics in Indonesian art can be used for ethical-moral education.

Is the practice of Sufism with its meditation still relevant and will be able to contribute to the values of 21st century? The answer is *yes*, so far as spirituality is concerned and *no*, so far as organised religion is concerned. Spirituality is practiced for peace and well-being and meditation is therapeutic. The Sufi method is the development of human being as a whole. With this development man comes to acquire universal knowledge. Sufism is science and wisdom, teaching us to practise and find a way towards God thus attaining *ma'nifat*, the ultimate knowledge of reality. ▀

# The Contribution of Khanqa-i-Niazia in Developing Music as a Vehicle for Love and Amity

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Naina Devi

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SUFISM is not a philosophy but an experience which can only be felt and not expressed in words. It is a divine art and should be practised in day-to-day life for the sheer joy of it. Sufi saints like Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki and Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia were fond of music and they used to go into the state of *Wajd*. When Sufism came to India, it could not resist the influence of music; gradually, a blend of *Sama* and Indian devotional music started to take shape, and *Qawwali* was born. This cultural fusion suited the temperament of the Indian people admirably and attracted large gatherings to its *mehfils*. *Qawwali* became the most successful method of preaching the tenets of Sufism. Sufi saints composed many mystic poems and lyrics in Arabic, Persian and Indian languages. Amir Khusrau put a new incentive in Sufi *mehfils* by his exceptional talent. His musical compositions gave rise to many stylised forms in Hindustani classical music.

In the eighteenth century another saint, scholar, and mystic poet Hazrat Shah Niaz Ahmad was born. He studied under the guidance of

Hazrat Shah Fakhruddin and became adept in philosophy, *tibb*, music, calligraphy and *Sipahgari*. Shah Fakhruddin was the *khalifa* of Hazrat Shah Kaleemullah Jahanabadi of Delhi, who gave his *khilafat* to Shah Niaz Ahmad. The *murids* of Shah Niaz Ahmed came to be known as Niazis. Some of the good musicians of the subcontinent are all Niazis. Shah Niaz Ahmad's compositions are sung far and wide today. His compositions have infused the spirit of love and humanity in all his admirers and disciples, transcending all barriers of religion, caste and creed. He teaches us to live a life of free thinking without dogmas. Humanity, love and devotion are the main pillars of *Khanqa-i-Niazia*. One learns to develop thoughts with a broad vision to prevent deterioration of the mind. The perpetual yearning of the mortal soul to unite with the Divine Soul, inspired Hazrat Shah Mohammad Taqi better known as Aziz Mian to compose many beautiful ghazals, thumris, hori and dadra compositions under the pen name of Raaz. The two predecessors of Aziz Mian were Shah Nizamuddin and Shah Mohiuddin who were equally renowned. They too, were fond of music and honoured musicians with their blessings. The present *qaddi nasheen* Shah Mohammad Hasnain is keeping up the tradition. Sufism teaches humanism which can be practised by human beings everywhere and at all times. It is particularly relevant now when we are passing through a period of chaos fanned by selfishness and violence. We must fill our minds with noble thoughts and serve humanity with love. Let our long standing tradition of amity be strengthened and preserved through music. □

# Anecdotes of a Provincial Sufi of the Delhi Sultanate

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Simon Digby

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THE contemporary and near contemporary literature of Sufis of the Delhi Sultanate sheds precious light on the religious and social life of Northern India in the 13th and 14th century and on ideas and concepts which prevailed in Muslim and Sufi circles in this environment. Manuscript transmission has however been limited. The present paper briefly examines another work which may be added to the corpus which has survived from before 1400 and represents a very different social level of religious behaviour. The work has previously been known only from the rare lithograph of the Nasim-i-Hind Press, Fatehpur, Haswa, 1893. According to Prof K.A. Nizami, the *Asrar-al-Makhdumin* is the *mafuz* of Khwaja Karak, containing interesting anecdotes concerning the saint and was compiled by Karim Yar. Nothing is known about the compiler or date of compilation.

In the lithographed printing, this appears as *Asrar-al-Makhdumin*, 'The secrets of the Lords'. This has no obvious relevance to the personality and activities of the holy man described in the work. In

the manuscript the title appears in the alternative form *Asrar al-Majdhubin*, 'The secrets of those drawn away'.

THE last ambiguity of which we can dispose, concerns the name of the holy man. In modern times, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he is remembered as Shah Karak. Karak is an onomatopoeic North Indian word used much like its English homophone, 'a crack of thunder'.

IT may help us to understand the character of this strange work if we examine the information it provides concerning the author and his family. We should probably understand the author's name as *Mohammad Isma'il* son of *Mas'ud Ali*. He states that when he was attending on Shaikh Jalaluddin Abu Sa'id Bukhari, a Darvesh gave him stories and verses about the miracles, sayings and spiritual authority (*Vilayat*) of Khwaja Gurg Abdal.

FROM the preface and a number of anecdotes, it is possible to establish some picture of the family of the compiler and their connection with Khwaja Gurg. They bore the *nisha Lahawn*, but appeared to have come from Lahore to Karra on the Ganges at least some decades before the end of the thirteenth century.

BIOGRAPHICAL statements about Khwaja Gurg are rare in the work. It is likely that he was a locally-born Muslim who never travelled far from his birth-place of Karra on the Ganges. His parents died when he was still young and one anecdote has him weeping besides the grave of his father. In an anecdote, with a possible historical basis, Khwaja Gurg, when urged by Sultan Alauddin Khalji to come to Delhi, declined the invitation and recited a favourite quatrain of his own composition:

I am content with dry bread and vegetables;  
My appetite was not for roast meat and lamb.  
Delhi and Samarqand and Bukhara and Iraq,  
You take them all and leave me Karra.

PERHAPS the most notable of all the gift-bestowing powers

credited to Sufis in medieval India and elsewhere, is that of bestowing kingship on aspirants to power. That Khwaja Gurg prophesied the kingship of Alauddin Khalji, when the latter was *Muqta* (Governor) of Karra under his uncle, was widely believed. Our text has a number of anecdotes about the special relationship between Khwaja Gurg and Sultan Alauddin.

THERE are many miraculous anecdotes in *Asraral-majdhubin*. The Khwaja, after dramatic and exhausting encounters in the streets and bazaars of Karra, would suddenly disappear for several days, and his adherents would believe that he had been away in distant holy places in the world of the unseen. On Friday evenings, he was supposed to be at the Kaaba or the tomb of the Prophet. On distant roads he would appear before travellers in peril and save men from dacoits, ghouls or wild beasts. Many anecdotes are part of the widely extended folklore of Sufi piety.

It cannot be claimed that *Asraral-Mujdhabin* is of great value for its factual and historical evidence, though something may be deduced from it regarding social life in a Muslim settlement in northern India in the thirteenth century, for which otherwise evidence is totally lacking. It equally lacks any profound or subtle spiritual content. Yet, it remains of some value as a recognizable addition to the early corpus of biographical literature regarding Sufis of the Delhi Sultanate, and as additional evidence of popular Muslim belief and practice in a remote community. □



# Sufism as Reflected in Punjabi Letters

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Kartar Singh Duggal

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THE Sufi saints succeeded in propagating Islam in Punjab after Mohammad Bin Qasim's conquest of Sindh and annexation of Multan. Shaikh Ali Hujwiri, better known as Data Ganj Baksh, a great scholar and author of *Kashful Mahjub*, was the first to exercise the influence of Sufism in Punjab. He was followed by Fariduddin Ganj-e-Shakar who wrote in Punjabi and his *slokas* are included in the Holy Granth. Shah Husain of Lahore made a deep study of Sufism and has a volume of verse to his credit. There is humility in his writing. Like Baba Farid he restricted his compositions to strictly indigenous Punjabi moulds of poetry. Sultan Bahu and Shah Sharaf are other Sufi poets of this period. Sain Bulhe Shah is the most outstanding among the next generation of Sufi poets belonging to Punjabi literature. He identified God with the universe, and maintained that God is the transcendental reality of which the material universe and man are only manifestations. Other poets of this period are Ali Hyder, Fard Faqir, Wajid and Dana.

THE above three phases of Sufism are reflected in Punjabi writing. The earlier period represented by Baba Farid was marked for

its humility, co-existence, asceticism and fear of God. Then, Shah Husain highlighted the cult of non-conformism or *malamat*. In the third phase, we have Sufi poets like Bulhe Shah with their faith in humanism, breaking the fetters of established religion. Some of the prominent characteristics of Sufi poetry are that the Sufi poets adopted the indigenous moulds of poetry like *Chhand*, *Doha*, *Kafi*, *Deoth* and *Siharfi*.

SUFI poetry in Punjabi abounds in typically Punjabi symbols. The symbolism is related to three different stages of Sufi's path of spiritual evolution. The first stage is that of a seeker called *salik*, the second is the longing to gain union with God. We owe it to the Sufi concept of love that a number of legendary lovers have been raised to the sanctity of spiritual protagonists. The third is the stage of pristine purity when the Sufi, having gone through the several tests, comes out unscathed. Man needs the grace of the *murshid* to save him.

THE greatest contribution of the Sufi poets is their rising above the narrow and parochial concepts of religion and laying emphasis on the love of God alone. The patriotic and socialistic attitudes of the Sufi poets and their sympathy with the have-nots and downtrodden, speak volumes for the healthy and forward-looking vision of the Sufis. The Sufi poetry in Punjab fostered communal amity and understanding and enriched it with forward-looking perceptions. □

# A Brief History of Mawlawiyyah and the Significance of the Mawlawi Rituals

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Ethem Ruhi Figlali

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M AWLAWIYYAH is a famous Sufi order in Turkish history. Its name is derived from Mawlana, a title given to Jalaluddin Rumi. It was his son Sultan Walad who founded the Mawlawiyyah order and helped it gain great respect. The rituals are performed in the *sama khana*, where the *Derwishes* meet for the performance of their *ayin* of religious ceremonies and public worship. One of the important parts of the *sama khana* is the kitchen. The first stage in becoming a Mawlawi *Derwish* begins in the kitchen. A disciple is instructed in his duties by the chief of the kitchen.

THE Mawlawi rites consist of six parts. The *Nat-i-Payghambari*, *Taqsim-i-Nay*, *Dawr-i-Sultan Walad*, *Salaam*, recitation from Quran and *Dua* or prayer. Another rite performed by the Mawlawis is called *Sama* which symbolizes Divine Love and ecstasy and a union with Allah. Fifteen to thirty *Derwishes* including a *Mutrib* take part in the *ayin*. They enter the *sama khana* bare-footed and seat themselves on the carpet. The Shaikh, wearing a green turban, advances to a red

sheep-skin rug, opposite the *Mutrib* and the service begins with the *Fatiha*. Then, some verses from the *Mathnawi* are recited and a prayer to the Pir asking for intercession of Allah and His Prophet. Then the *Nat-i-Payghambari* is chanted followed by the *Nay* performance. The *ayin* is symbolic and is the result of uniting the mental and oral worship. The first symbol is the *Nay* or reed-flute which symbolizes man. The second symbol is *qudum*, an allusion to the Prophet Ismail. *Dawr-i-Sultan Walad* is the symbol of three kingdoms of nature, i.e. animal, vegetable and mineral and an indication of the resurrection of the dead and of the eternal life through the guidance of the Shaikh. The four *Salaams* are the symbol of four universes. The *post* or sheep-skin rug of the Shaikh is the symbol of the unity. The *post* is the greatest moral position. Its colour is red which is the colour of union and manifestation.

MAWLANA Jalaluddin Rumi was one of the deliverers who devoted his life to the peace and security of human beings. He penetrated deeply into human life. His *Mathnawi* offers wisdom and truth. One cannot imagine an intervention more subtle and sincere in the name of social justice, freedom of conscience and social order. The *Mathnawi* guides man towards a more balanced, controlled, and measured system and towards faith in all ages. It is meant for the human being, who is drawn at one time to error and at another to seek the truth in his doubts, uncertainties, falterings and confusion; it is an eternal guide stretching from the past to the future. □

# Interpretation of the Sufi Idea of Love and Separation in the Poetry of Kabir and Malik Muhammad Jayesi

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N. B. Gafurova

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THE interaction of Sufi and Bhakti literature has attracted the attention of many Soviet scholars. Kabir and Jayesi are important Sufi poets of this period. Kabir was a weaver by profession and had great love for Ram and Rahim. To his secular mind, both were the names of the same God. He was the initiator of *Nirguna Bhakti*, which rejected caste system, religious rites, customs and dogmas. It was the synthesis of Hindu-Muslim religio-philosophical ideas from Vedanta as well as mysticism, and preached the love of God and mankind.

SUFISM spread in India during the 11th Century. This was the renaissance period in the East. In India, it took the form of Bhakti and Sufi movement in which the equality and aspiration of common people was preached and expressed in mystical form. Love of God and ultimate union with God are the main messages of both Sufism and Bhakti. In India, this love of God, along with the message of equality of all His creation and the message of brotherhood in Islam, amalgamated with the philosophy of Bhakti movement. The ideologues of this move-

ment were common people who reached out to the masses, spreading their message in a simple colloquial language, which expressed the hopes and aspirations of the masses. Kabir was one of those, who tried to reach people through the medium of poetry. According to his philosophy, a man's character was not totally determined by divine influence, but also by the human influences around him. The Persian saint-poet 'Shaikh Saadi' has also expressed the same sentiment by saying, 'Do not keep company with evil men, lest their ill name and reputation stays with you.'

KABIR preached that true love of God lies not in observing religious rites and dogmas, but in purifying one's heart. The love of true faith is love of God rather than servility. His (Kabir's) love was for God, as well as, for his fellow men.

LET US take a look at the literary, philosophical and religious aspects of the Hindu-Muslim synthesis of Bhakti and Sufism by examining the work of Kabir and Jayesi. Jayesi was a follower of the Chishtiya order of Sufism. He married a Hindu woman who herself became an ardent promoter of Sufism. Jayesi's poetry is styled in the form of a *Masnavi* in the Persian tradition, but is written in simple *Avadhi* which was the popular dialect of the people in North India at that time. His epic poem *Padmavat* is a classical example of mystic love expressed in folklore. The theme of this great story is love and separation with highly romantic sequences and experiences which are inherent in both Hindu and Muslim culture. Here he tries to show that separation from the beloved is actually the suffering of the human soul separated from God. In Jayesi's, as well as Kabir's poetry, we find that separation and love are the predominant sentiments. According to both, *birha* which means pain, suffering and separation, springs from *prem* or love. Without love, there is no pain of separation. *Birha* is separation of a lover from his beloved, or of a man from his deity. Love itself includes longing and suffering. When the two poets talk of a lover renouncing the world for the sake of his beloved, they symbolise the human soul, forsaking everything worldly

for the final union with God. Hence, *birha* is depicted as longing, suffering and waiting for this unity.

KABIR and Jayesi overstressed the fact that love and *birha* are inseparable and mingle into one another. According to them love is purely mystical. It encompasses *birha*, suffering and longing and results in the ultimate union with the beloved, that is God. □



# **Chishtiah Order and Secular Approach with Reference to Khwaja Shaikh Fariduddin Shakarh-Ganj**

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**Nizamuddin S. Gorekar**

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**S**UFISM is a philosophy through which knowledge is acquired, through knowledge action is regularised, through action wisdom is sought and through wisdom piety is achieved. It is piety which teaches its followers to keep aloof from this temporal world and thereby, inclining them towards eternal life and ultimately bringing them nearer God. In other words, Sufism, which is the sum and substance of the Divine Revelation and Prophetic Traditions, inculcates the sentiments of fraternity, equality and equity, coupled with the sense of service to humanity, in the followers, irrespective of race, community, caste, creed and colour. In the earlier stages, it did lay stress on the Love of God, but later emphasized on the need of the development of man with the purification of mind, through prayer and meditation.

THE *khanqah* of the Sufis has been serving not only as the training centre of brotherhood, but also as the fountainhead of knowledge and treasure-house of guidance for their disciples. In this way, the followers were saved from moral crisis, economic exploitation

and social ailments and succeeded, in the end, in maintaining communal harmony and social stability through religious tolerance. Among the Sufi orders of India, Chishtiah is predominant. It inculcated a sense of duty in the rulers and monarchs to administer justice and equity and to do away with social disorder and religious intolerance. According to the Sufistic dictum, 'A good man is one who bears excellent character, possesses admirable habits, and performs righteous actions.' The Chishti order entirely conformed to the indigenous conditions and environment of the country and, thereby, attracted a large number of followers of all shades and ideology. The Chishti hierarchy, begun in India by Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti had a long line of spiritual successors. Khwaja Shaikh Fariduddin Masood Ganj-i-Shakar, in many ways, was the most outstanding and respected among the Chishti Sufis. He saw no harm in borrowing spiritual techniques and practices from Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Vaishnavite and Saivite traditions, which were not against Islam and which were conducive to spiritual attainments. A new relationship between *murshid* or *guru* and *murid* or *chela* was established, and his *khanqah* became a centre of service and worship. Khwaja Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar was a messenger of a humane way of life; a heralder of unity in diversity, who served as a bridge of unity and understanding across the gulf of separate religious traditions. He considered all as equals and was for imparting education to all. The supreme aim of his life was to inspire love and affection in the hearts of the people. To him, barriers of caste and creed, high and low, rich and poor, educated and illiterate meant nothing. His monastery was a centre of cultural synthesis in which he tried hard to bridge the gulf between various social, ideological, linguistic and cultural groups in India and consequently, championed the cause of composite culture of India. □

# Maulana Rum's Contribution to Indian Sufism with Special Reference to the Role of Murshid (Preceptor)

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M.G. Gupta

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ACCORDING to the Sufi spiritual tradition, no human being can attain spiritual *maqams* without a living, human preceptor, who lives in society as a part of it. The ancient Indians had rejected the concept of a guru sitting on the mountain, in a cave or a hut in the forest outside the pale of human habitation, because such a saint or guru is of no use to human beings. He cannot serve as the medium for man's deliverance. Only the saint who lives as an ordinary householder can be the instrument of man's deliverance, the true *murshid* or guru. One should not take initiation from a *murshid* without gauging the extent of his knowledge and intelligence. The disciple or *murid* is, indeed, like a *murdah* or dead man at the hands of the *murshid* and has to be revived. The disciple bows to the *murshid* who opens with the collyrium-stick of knowledge the eye blinded by the darkness of ignorance. The preceptor is a past-master in *sadhana* or penance. It is impertinent and foolish to test the spiritual knowledge of the *murshid*.

THE doctrine that a *homo-sapien* can never be a man's guru is rejected by the Sufi tradition. The theory that a *murshid* is God,

Nature or a Mantra, is squarely rejected by the Sufi spiritual tradition. For the uninitiated, a guru, in whom there is divine power (*sadhana*) is necessary. Such powers exist in conscious beings only, and not in the unconscious things. Lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, envy can be subjugated with the help of the guru. The Sufis decree that if the preceptor gives a command which is even contrary to the scriptures, that command must be considered approved by all the scriptures of the world. Only the saint who lives as an ordinary householder can explain the subtle divine mysteries in the language which the ordinary mortals can understand.

'*GURISHIP*' is never hereditary. The Sufi spiritual tradition warns against '*gurudom*.' It is against this background that we briefly refer to Maulana Rumi's contribution to Indian Sufism and the impact of his *Mathnawi* on such Indian mystic saints as Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Kabir, Nanak, Sarimad and the preceptors of the Radhaswami faith of Agra. *Mathnawi* carries the message that nobody can attain God without the guidance of the perfect, living preceptor or guru. Man can find such a guru if he has the quest. Once you have met the guru, surrender yourself to him and never quarrel with him or question his orders. He is the best swimmer, who can take you across the ocean of this world; the best physician, who can cure all your chronic and acute ailments. Only a living and speaking guru can be your salvation. The living guru guides you in the difficult spiritual journey full of perils and pitfalls. Don't fall into the trap of the pretenders. The real gurus are warriors; the false are cowardly. Only a genuine seeker with an open mind will be able to recognize a true guru. It is only God's light as reflected in the guru that can extinguish the fire of lust. The guru is light, wisdom, knowledge, love and beauty. □

# Mevlana on the Perfect Man

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Afzal Iqbal

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**G**OD created man in His own image and breathed in him part of His own spirit. He invested him with His Vice Regency on earth. All men are born equal and pure. There is no original sin. Both soul and body are integrated in man who represents the highest act of divine creation. Man is the pinnacle and the pivot of the universe. God shared His knowledge with him and overruled angels, while entrusting him with the affairs of the world. Knowledge, intelligence and awareness are qualities which distinguish him both from beasts and angels. Man alone has been invested with the fatal power to make his own decisions. Life is nothing but knowledge. Our spirit is more than the spirit of animals in the sense that it has more knowledge.

**MAULANA** Rumi offers a theory of evolution of man and dwells on various stages of development. The Creator was leading man from his animal state towards the human till he became intelligent, wise and mighty. Quoting a tradition of the holy Prophet, Rumi elaborates on the nature of man. The Prophet said God created the angels and

infused them with reason. He created the sons of Adam and set in them reason and lust; and he, whose lust prevails over his reason, is lower than the beasts.

As a Sufi, Rumi utterly opposes quietism, withdrawal and escape. His emphasis on effort and constant activity is overwhelming. God is not idle and inactive for a single moment. Even vain struggle is better than idleness. He exhorts the poor to work and not rely on a miracle. None can reap until he sows. One must earn a living so long as the body is able. They only live who dare. One must take life by its forelock and not seek to run away from it. One must seek and search. Search cannot be postponed until tomorrow. A Sufi is the heralder of time.

In Rumi's view the Divine call to prophecy signifies struggle. It means coming out into the open to accept the challenge. Prophet Mohammad was called upon to abandon the quiet solitude of the cave and emerge into the open. He was asked to wage war against tyranny; to destroy the order that was based on injustice and exploitation. There is nothing wrong with wealth and property. What is wrong is that you should earn it through unlawful means. Bread without endeavour is not in accordance with God's law. Rumi rejects the concept of a static world and believes that all phenomena are annihilated and recreated at every moment. He believes in free will and the capacity of man to choose his actions for himself. Beyond doubt we possess a certain power of choice. If we did not, command and prohibition would lose all meaning. Reward and rebuke would be pointless. The power of choice and the instinct to choose are latent in the soul. The power to choose good or evil is increased manifold by inspiration and suggestion.

The last Prophet represents the culmination of man's achievement of the highest attainable limit. In him the institution of prophethood exists, and future *risalat* is abolished. He will remain for ever a beacon of light and guidance for mankind. He has made unique contribution to the emancipation of man. Mohammad, therefore, is the Perfect Man. □

# A Comparative Study of the Treatment of *Futuh* in the Principal Chishti Records

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Riazul Islam

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**I**N the teachings of the Prophet of Islam much emphasis has been placed on *kash* or earning one's livelihood through the labour of one's hands. Such exertions have been equated to *ibadat* or worship of God. There is an equally marked emphasis on *tawakkul* or reliance on God. The early Sufis recognised *kash* as an Apostolic *sunnat* and they were much concerned, lest the practice of *tawakkul* should come in the way of the emulation of the *sunnat* of *kash*. The notion that a genuine Sufi should depend on God for his sustenance and should not exert to earn his bread, started taking root in Sufism from the tenth century onwards. By the time the Chishti Sufis arrived in India, *tawakkul* had become a predominant feature of Sufism. If the Sufi was not to earn his livelihood, he should wait for *futuh* or unasked-for charity. If no one came to offer *futuh*, the Sufi was to wait patiently and quietly, never complaining. The Sufi could beg for himself and for other starving Sufis, if hunger became intolerable. This was known as *zanhil* or the begging bowl. Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia justifies the practice of *futuh* by citing a tradition. When Umar bin al Khattab declined to accept something offered by the Prophet,

the latter remarked, 'When someone gives you something without your asking, take it, use it and give the unused portion to someone else.'

THE Chishtis in general disfavoured acceptance of *futuh* from state sources, and excercised greatest care in accepting cash *futuh*. According to Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia, 'Only that person has the right to accept *futuh* who has lost his hands and feet, or one who does not undertake any work, goes to no one seeking succour and does not accept a fixed payment. Only such a person may accept *futuh*.' The *futuh* was received daily at the hospices of the Chishti saints and the amounts were given away to others. If the misuse or pilferage of the *futuh* came to the notice of the saints, it made them tremble with rage. The *Siyarul Auliya* says, that when Shaikh Nizamuddin's end was near, he ordered that all the grains in the store rooms should be distributed. He then summoned all his close companions, disciples and servants and requested them to be witnesses to this distribution. □

# **Evidence of Social Protest in Sufi Literature : A Case Study of Kashmir**

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**Mohammad Ishaq Khan**

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**T**HERE was a great Brahmanical caste tyranny in Kashmir during the 14th century, and therefore, a continued social discontent against Brahmin supremacy. Some scholars point to the egalitarian role of Islam, its social values, and to the Sufis as a contributing factor in starting a philanthropic and egalitarian tradition. The significance of Sufis and Sufi literature in fostering a meaningful interaction between Islam and society in medieval times was tremendous. Specially significant is the role of a Kashmiri Sufi, Nuruddin Rishi, who was not only an apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity, but his poetry expressed the cultural style of Islamic civilization in a caste-ridden region and the quality of human spirit that flourishes within it.

THERE are many incidents of Nuruddin's conversations with Brahmins, and his convincing them by arguments against being contemptuous towards lower classes and castes. There were many conversions. There was a general belief that a man of lower origin could not serve or recognise God. Nuruddin argued against this theory by advocating virtues like identification with the poor and opposition to the caste

system. While explaining the abstract and profound spiritual meaning of God's reality, he generated a new sense of awareness among people, asked them to throw off their traditional bonds and regard nature as their guide, and through introspection recognise the ultimate reality.

NURUDDIN was a great champion of the downtrodden and an upholder of human equality and brotherhood. He was deeply concerned and felt strongly about the distinction that separated man from man. In his own humble way he made a bold attempt to remove such barriers through a mystical explanation of natural phenomena. According to him, it was not man's noble birth but ultimately his action that was important in determining his social status. This persuasive mystico-social philosophy influenced not only Muslims and lower castes but also some men of piety and seekers of knowledge among Brahmins, who then popularised his poetry by copying his verses and preserving them for posterity.

THE essence of Kashmir's transition to Islam is the interaction that a universal faith sought at the social level during centuries of acculturation. Islam brought tremendous tension of a social and ethical nature within a society characterised by the established notions of piety and superiority of the Brahmins. It raised the social status of the most despised sections of the community. Most of the legends in the traditional Kashmiri society revolve on questions of social significance rather than on purely religious issues. There is no bias or prejudice in Islam against Hinduism.

IN conclusion, the conversion to Islam in Kashmir was accomplished not by denouncing any religion but by dialogue and discussion. □

# Some Rare Manuscripts on Sufism and Their Significance

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Shaukat Ali Khan

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**S**UFISM is an ideology of universal brotherhood, good moral values, service to mankind and ultimate union with God. There are many Sufis who have preached harmony and love of mankind, leading to cultural integration. Sufis of Rajasthan have contributed greatly to Sufism and the cultivation of secularism and harmony. The Arabic and Persian Research Institute has a number of rare and valuable documents on Sufism which are preserved for research scholars and students.

1. *Adab-us-Sufiyah* (Arabic) d. 412 A.H. or AD 1021 by Abu Abdur Rahman.

It is a very rare document not found anywhere else, so it has been micro-filmed. It contains the philosophy and spirituality of Sufism, and the concept of heavenly visions, meditations and prayers.

2. *Mazhar-un-Nur* (Arabic) d. 1193 A.H. or AD 1779.

This is also an unpublished rare document on the

Sufic theory of pantheism, translated by Syed Nurul Huda. The commentary has been written by his son.

3. *Al Urwah-li-Ahl-il-Khalwah* (Arabic) d. 743 A.H. or AD 1339.

A rare treatise written by Abul Makarim Ahmad Ala-ud-Daulah, expounding the doctrine of God, while dealing with other dogmas of Islam and tenets of Sufism.

4. *Tarjumat-ul-Kitab* (Arabic) d. 1058 A.H. or AD 1649.

An authentic work by Shaikh Muhibbulah on Sufi doctrines and containing his *Minhiyat*. It is a very rare copy which contains comprehensive work of importance, establishing the theological and mystical, system of Sufis. It has four sections, each dealing with dogmatic theology, religious law, Sufic discipline and Sufic experience.

5. *Sharhu Awarif-ul Ma'arif* (Arabic) d. 825 A.H. or AD 1421.

A unique commentary propounded by Syed Mohammad Hasan al Husaini Banda Nawaz Gesu Daraz, a favourite disciple of Shah Nasiruddin Chirag-e-Delhi on *Awarif ul Ma'arif* of Shahabuddin Suhrawardi. It is an extensive and exhaustive commentary containing 1056 pages with marginal notes.

6. *Naqd un Nusus*.

A rare and valuable document for Sufis and scholars. It is a collection of Sufi philosophy, of mysticism, and ethics, being an elucidation of the mystic ideas of Ibn-i-Arabi. This manuscript is a very old copy. The date of its transcription is not given, but from marginal notes, calligraphy etc., it seems to be half a

millenium old but still in good condition. It has marginal notes and comments written in the hand of Jami, Dara Shikoh and others.

**7. *Asrar-ul-Ahkam Sharhu Shariat-ul-Islam* (Arabic).**

An authentic and rare treatise. It is a commentary on *Shariat-ul-Islam* by Yaqub al Binbani after collation and amendment.

**8. *Baghyat us-Salikin ila Ashraf il Masalik* (Arabic) d.7th-13th century circa.**

Written by Shaikh-ul Imam Abu Abdullah Ahmad Sahili. An antique work on Sufism, containing many seal impressions of the keepers of Mughal libraries.

**9. *Sharah -i-Hadiqah Hakim* (Persian) d. 1048 A.H. or AD 1638.**

A commentary on *Hadiqah* of Abul Majduddin Adam Abbasi d. 545 A.H. or AD 1150, written by Abdul Latif bin Abdullah Sinai, with marginal glosses on the revised *Hadiqah*. It represents an abridgement from his larger commentary.

**10. *Jawami-ul Kalim* (Persian).**

A rare and valuable work containing discourses and spiritual teachings of Abu Farh Sadruddin Syed Mohammad Husaini Gesu-Daraz. d. 825 A.H. or AD 1421 written by Mohammad Akbar Husaini. It is an illuminated and ornate work of good calligraphy and ornate frontispiece ruled in gold with seals of some royal libraries.

**11. *Tabaqat-i-Shahjehani* (Persian).**

A rare unpublished work of eminence containing the biographical notices of 881 celebrities from Taimur to Shahjehan. Composed by Mohammad Shahid during Shahjehan's reign, its first section is devoted

exclusively to Sufis, saints and sages, and the second to scholars, philosophers and pedagogues and the last to poets.

**12. *Sairab-us-Sadr or Sairab us-Sudur* (Persian) d. 969 A.H. or AD 1560 circa.**

An important and rare compendium containing biographical notices of Sufis and sages compiled by an anonymous author sometime after AD 1560. It is damaged at both ends and starts halfway with the account of Shaikh Imamuddin Ismail and ends abruptly at the description of Bibi Fatima Sam, in the context of women Sufis.

**13. *Ashjar-ul Jamal or Akhbar-ul Jamal* (Persian) d. 1153 A.H. or AD 1740.**

Rare work containing biographical notices, discourses and other Sufi practices and prayers compiled during the reign of Mohammad Shah in 1153 A.H. or AD 1740. The name of its author could not be identified as it is damaged. It comprises mainly the life, teachings, and work of Baba Farid Ganj-i-Shakar.

**14. *Adab-ul Muridin* (Arabic) d. 563 A.H. or AD 1163.**

Composed by Abul Najib Abdul Qahir bin Abdullah Suharwardi; it deals with the Suharwardi order, method, rights, duties and code of conduct for the followers.

ALL these rare, invaluable and unique manuscripts throw light on the prevalent conditions of the society and culture of their contemporary world. They are treasure houses of Sufi ideology and the mystic way of life. They also represent the emergent trends of the society—like social injustices between the rulers and the ruled and also speak lovingly about the origin, evolution and development of various cultures, arts, languages, and science which are encompassed by Sufism. □

# **Sufism through the Ages in Punjab : Historicity of Shaikh Farid's Word (Bani) in Adi Granth**

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**Jaswant Singh Marwah**

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**S**UFI saints and poets have played a very unique role through the ages in the history of Islamic mysticism as well as in the history of Hindu philosophy and Sikh religious tradition, in creating an environment of cordial relations between various communities. As observed by Dr S. Radhakrishnan, the movements of Ramananda, Chaitanya, Kabir and Nanak show the stimulus of Islam. Yet, it is quite reasonable to assume that both Sufism and Islam have been influenced, directly or indirectly, by Hindu thought and Buddhist philosophy in India and abroad.

IN India, Sufis not only made the most valuable contribution towards the interaction between the Hindus and the Muslims, but also helped peaceful conversions to Islam—more than the rulers who exercised political authority. During the three centuries of Arab rule in Sindh, several local princes accepted Islam. Many Sufi saints had settled in Northern and North-Western parts of India. The Sufis had spread a network of various orders throughout India. The net effect of their teaching was to break down the barriers of Islamic theological dogmatism

on the one hand, and those of Hindu social exclusiveness and caste discrimination on the other. Their policy was *sulh-i-kul* (peace with all), like the one followed by Mughal Emperor Akbar. The Sufis also found the widest response to their message among the outcastes and depressed classes. For them, the creed of Islam with its emphasis on equality, not only ensured free and equal entry into the great Islamic brotherhood, but also, exemption from the burdensome poll-tax.

SOON after the conquest of Punjab by Mahmud of Ghazna, Sufism made its way there and Sufi saints started pouring in. Among them was Shaikh Farid of the Chishti Order, also known as Baba Farid.

GURU Nanak was fully aware of the vast proselytization work of the *gaddi* (throne) of Shaikh Farid, and he accordingly met the successors of Sufi *pirs* during his travels and held discourses with them. It was because of the universality and catholicity of Shaikh Farid's teachings that his Word (*Bani*) was collected by Guru Nanak Dev and continuously read and annotated by him and his successors. It was preserved until Guru Arjun Dev compiled *Adi Granth* in AD 1604 and incorporated Shaikh Farid's *Bani* along with writings of other Muslim Saints and Hindu Bhakts. It is interesting that in Guru Nanak Dev we find the universal message of love, equality, ethics and morality, as expressed in *Adi Granth*, which incorporates Farid *Bani*, reflecting a striking similarity between the essential belief of Muslims and the Sikhs. Both emphasize monotheism, love of God and service of humanity as the crown and apex of all activities. Overwhelming evidence also proves that Baba Farid is the real author of *Shlokas* and four *Shabads* in the *Adi Granth*. I would submit that both Guru Nanak Dev and Baba Farid aimed at cutting across all barriers of caste, creed, faith, colour or sex, bringing the erring hearts and sinful souls on the golden path of righteousness and showing to the world that people could be conquered through the 'alchemy of love'. Both Guru Nanak, the succeeding Sikh Gurus, and the Sufi saints through the ages have been a source of great inspiration to all not only in the Punjab but the whole of India. □

# Tasawwuf : A Social System

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Anwar Moazzam

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BUILDING a society has been the ultimate objective of every system of thought whether religious or non-religious. Different cultures have been experimenting with different philosophies, political and economic theories, and religious systems for the establishment and administration of peaceful and happy societies. New theories and ideologies have been developed to meet the requirements of the immense expansion in human knowledge. Rearrangements of values in different societies in different areas of the world have been made according to their respective social, political and economic structures, and the material and emotional demands of the new man and the new woman. Concepts like democracy, secularism, socialism, capitalism and institutions like legislative bodies, banks, courts and universities have been and are being used. Is there any justification for relating *Tasawwuf* to this material activity?

How is Sufism, a discipline dealing with an intimate man-God relationship relevant to a discussion on the theory and methodology of social engineering? A Sufi's ultimate objective is to achieve closeness

with the Divine and gnosis of the ultimate. A Sufi develops his firm belief in the oneness of God and a total surrender to the Divine Will. His resolve to experience God's Presence (*Ihsan*) persuades him to obey all divine commands and, in the process, he realizes the insignificance of attachment to worldly gains. He gradually moves towards Allah and away from what is other than Allah. This movement does not mean renunciation of the world, since denial of social and moral responsibilities is denial of human reality. *Tariqat* aims at rejection of all those concepts which distort the true nature of human beings and humanism, and acceptance and practising of all those values which help in determination of human reality.

THE appeal of *Tasawwuf* rests with the universalism of the message of Islam. It represents the original Meccan approach of the Messenger of God towards the suffering humanity. During the Meccan period, the Messenger of God addressed human beings, who were all non-Muslims. The Meccan approach conveys the message for the suffering humanity through a perfect model of human excellence. It was this Meccan approach which is adopted by the Sufis. The Sufis did not use miracles to attract people's attention. People, mainly the suffering, the lonely and oppressed, flocked around them because of the rays of confidence, love, hope and total rejection of all worldly authority emitting from their charismatic personalities. The Sufis did not avoid people, they lived with them sharing their daily concerns. Their *Khanqahs* created a common brotherhood of both Muslims and non-Muslims, disciplined by values of love, equality and mutual sharing of sorrows under the Shaikh's loving care and guidance.

A society, in order to change itself, requires concepts and methodology suited to the nature of the desired change. For the contemporary world, what is most desired is peace-- peace of mind, peace in society and peace between nations and communities. *Tasawwuf* can be used for regeneration of human society as it is a system of behaviour. The Sufistic values are to be practised as codes of social conduct. *Tasawwuf*, as a socio-ethical content of religious universalism, can be used by the

contemporary mind in the struggle for transforming the existing chaos into an order of peace. □



# The Contribution of McGill Institute of Islamic Studies to Islamic Mysticism

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Mehdi Mohaghegh

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'In the Name of Allah'

THE aim of this paper is to inform the people of other countries about the efforts undertaken by various scholars in different countries to publish Islamic works. It is a matter of great satisfaction that through such seminars scholarly efforts for reviving the Islamic intellectual heritage in all parts of the world are brought to the attention of the people. With this paper a list of thirty-seven most important books about mysticism and gnosticism recently published in Iran has also been attached.

THE Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, one of the most famous and renowned institutions of Islamic studies in North America, was established in 1952. In this Institute different aspects of Islam and Islamic thought are discussed, researched and taught. During my three years stay at the Institute, I availed of the company of such august personalities as Professor Toshihiko Izvestio, Professor of Islamic Philosophy and Professor Herman Lendlett, Professor of Islamic Mysticism. We decided that

the unrecognised works of great Iranian scholars should be published after critical rectification and the same should be introduced to the world of knowledge through translation or foreword, either in English or French. With this view we decided to publish a collection by the name, *Islamic Thought Series*.

IT is not possible here to give a detailed account of all publications of the Institute. I would only mention briefly the efforts we have made to introduce Islamic mysticism and gnostics.

THE first book of our series is a part of the book *Sharah Gharar Ul Faraid* by Haj Mulla Hadi Sabzvari (d.1289 Hijri). In this book the question of *Wahdatul Wujud*, the Unity of Existence, which is one of the most important issues of mysticism, has been discussed.

OUR second publication was *A Collection of Lectures and Papers on Islamic Philosophy and Gnosticism*. The first paper by Ustad Mohammad Taqi Danish Puzoh is *Kherqa - E- Hazar Mekhi*. In the Foreword, he discusses the various kinds of the mantles of the dervishes and how they are bequeathed to other dervishes. The second part of this paper is a letter which Shaikh Majaduddin Baghdadi has written to Najmuddin Kabri and in which he has sought the permission to be present before the latter. The third part of this paper is an article that Najmuddin Kabri has written for Raziuddin Ali Lala. The third paper, by Professor H. Lendlett is 'Simani on Wahadatnul Wujud'. This is about the criticism by Alauddolah Simnani (636-659 Hijri) on the belief of *Wahdatul Wujud* of Mohiuddin Ibn-i-Arabi who is renowned as Magister Maximus.

OUR third publication is *Marmoozat-E-Asadl, Dar Mazmoorat-E-Davari* by Najmuddin Razi who was the pupil of Majaduddin Baghdadi, who, in turn, is one of the disciples of Najmuddin Kabri, after whom is named one of the most important orders of Islamic mysticism—the order of Kabriyeh.

OUR fourth publication is *Jashn Nameh Henry Corbin*, which

was compiled by Dr Syed Hussein Nasr and was published in 1977. This book has seven parts, the fourth is about mysticism and Shiism. Its seventh part contains Arabic and Persian texts.

OUR fifth publication is *A collection of Poems and Treatise of Lahiji*. Shamsuddin Mohammad Bin Yahya Lahiji, popularly known as Asiri (d. 912 Hijri), 849 became the disciple of Mohammad Nurbaksh, the founder of the order of Nurbakshiah and remained with him for sixteen years.

OUR sixth publication is a book by Nuruddin Abdur Rehman Jami (d. 898 Hijri). Jami in this book has compiled the sayings of philosophers and also the sayings of mystics and gnostics. This book, in fact, is a sort of book of arbitration between different groups having dissimilar views.

OUR seventh publication is *Kashf Ul Asrar* by Nuruddin Abdur Rehman Asfaraeeni (d. 717 Hijri) which was written in response to certain queries, and is a treatise on reclusion and the behaviour of mystics.

OUR eighth publication, *Rabab Nameh*, is a treatise by Sultan Walad, the son of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi Sultan Walad, in this book, has tried to explain the difficulties in the poetry of Maulana Rumi in simple language.

OUR ninth publication is *Nasoosul Khusoos Fi Tarjamatal Fasoos*. This is a commentary by Ruknuddin Shirazi, known as Baba Rukna, on *Fusus al Hikam* written by Mohiuddin Ibn-i-Arabi. This commentary, particularly in comparison to the two other commentaries recently published in Iran, is far better and more comprehensive.





# The Sufi Theory of Knowledge and its Significance in Contemporary World

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M.A. Quasem

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**I**SLAM has attached tremendous value and importance to knowledge, education and instruction. However, neither the Quran nor the Prophet put forward a theory of knowledge, nor did the Prophet's companions (*Ashab*), or their followers (*Taihun*), including the ascetics, seek to formulate any theory of knowledge. However, from a thorough study of Sufi writings, a Sufi theory of knowledge does emerge. It starts with a strong emphasis upon the value and importance of knowledge, learning and instruction.

KNOWLEDGE is sought as a means to an end and has both, intrinsic and extrinsic value. To prove that knowledge is the essence of excellence, the Sufis argue that the greatest achievement of man is eternal happiness in the hereafter, and this happiness will never be attained except through knowledge. They recognise various types of knowledge, but consider knowledge of the path of hereafter, as the most excellent of all types. This knowledge, they claim, is included in what God, in the Quran, called understanding (*fiqh*), wisdom (*hikma*), knowledge (*ilm*), enlightenment (*diya*), light (*nur*), guidance (*hidaya*),

and right direction (*rushd*). Those who acquire this knowledge are called by the Sufis the learned men of the hereafter (*ulema-al-akhira*).

KNOWLEDGE of practical religion is divided into outward knowledge (*ilm-e-zahir*) meaning knowledge of bodily action, and inward knowledge (*ilm-e-batin*), which means knowledge of actions of the soul. Besides the knowledge of the path of the hereafter, the Sufis recognise the value of many other types of knowledge, most of which contribute to the welfare of this world. They argue that since this world is a place of preparation for the hereafter, it is necessary to ensure its welfare and ordering, through different professions, arts, crafts, and industries. So, the sciences dealing with them should be regarded as praiseworthy and may be sought by those who have already completed the acquisition of obligatory knowledge.

FOLLOWING a tradition ascribed to the Prophet Mohammad, the Sufis believe that seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim, but disagree among themselves as to what this knowledge really is. The Sufi, Abu Talib al-Makki, has put forward his own view that obligatory knowledge is only the knowledge of the five pillars of Islam. These pillars are: the testimony that there is no God but Allah, and that Mohammad is His messenger, the ritual prayer, the fasting, the *Zakat* and the pilgrimage. Al-Makki's argument is that since only these five things are obligatory upon every Muslim, only knowledge of how to perform them must be regarded as obligatory and nothing else. Al-Ghazzali offers what he considers a comprehensive account of obligatory knowledge. He says that practical religion has three aspects: belief, work and prohibition, and it is the knowledge of these three aspects which is obligatory upon every Muslim.



# Localising Islam : Sama in the Royal Court of Chishti Saints

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Regula B. Qureshi

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THE Indian subcontinent has enjoyed a vitality and continuity of the *sama* tradition which has few parallels in the history of Islam. This vitality is directly linked to the deep local roots of Indian Sufism.

WHAT is most conspicuous about *sama* is its spiritual vitality alongwith its professionalisation. Among Indian Sufis, the tradition of *sama* was established and it took on a special character. How does *sama* music contribute to the institution of sainthood and to Sufi veneration and worship of saints? Saints occupy a central position and *sama* plays an essential role in maintaining that role. We cannot deny the primary importance accorded by Sufism to *sama* as a means of partaking in the experiential dimension of spiritual achievement.

IN the Indian subcontinent, Sufism and practice of *sama* took root in the 13th century. At this time the Indo-Muslim social structure was dominated by courts and nobles and their code of behaviour. Of the four main Sufi *Tariqas* introduced in India, the Chishtiya came

first and spread most widely. Land endowment and elite patronage contributed to their shrines becoming quasi-feudal, controlled by a particular saint and his descendants or spiritual representatives. Sufi genealogy is an important part of Sufi tradition linking the devotee to his *pir*, Hazrat Ali and to the Prophet. The *sama* performer is not part of this hierarchy, but just a professional attached to a particular *dargah* or a Shaikh.

LATER in the century, *sama* shifted from the intimate group singing in the *Khanqah* to *Mehfil-e-Sama*, which served as a context for the Sufi's encounter with the experience of mystical love; The second form is *Darbar-e-Auliya*, the 'royal court of saints'—a formal assembly convened in the name of a saint, presided over by a person of highest spiritual authority, structured in accordance with the saintly hierarchy represented. Rules akin to courtly etiquette, serve to articulate the relationship within the hierarchy. The *sama* performer brings the entire vision to life, evoking the spiritual reality of the said saint during his life and after his death. The institutional importance of *sama* is directly related to its validating function *vis-a-vis* the saint and his spiritual descendant. It is partly spiritual and partly historical. *Sama* tradition operates as oral and *sama* poetry is preserved in writing.

THE Chishti commitment and contribution to *sama* in India is overwhelming. At the core of the large song repertoire of *sama* is the textual and musical composition of Amir Khusro, a disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya, and Sufi poet *par excellence*. He is considered the founding father of Qawwali. His music shows his love and reverence for his saint, and evokes the spiritual-emotional link to that Shaikh.

QAWWALI-poetry is usually in three languages. The original Farsi, evocative of spirituality and saintly utterances, Hindi, a language devotional in simple terms, and Urdu.

SUFIS identify *sama* poetry of two types. One which focuses on

spiritual links addressing figures of Sufi hierarchy in praise and devotion. God in *Hamd*, Prophet in *Naat*, and saints in *Manqabat*. The second type focuses on spiritual emotion, or mystical love, ecstatic states and on separation and union. Some of this poetry is composed by the saints themselves, some addresses the saint, while some is associated with certain aspects of a saint's life and works, or with the ritual devotion to the saint and his shrine.

Music of *sama* is set within metric framework, accompanied by *Dholak*, *Tabla*, *Sarangi*, *Harmonium* and *Sitar*. It is sung by a group of *qawwals* who are led by one or two solo singers. The music can be classical or folk. The *qawwals* of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya sing mostly Amir Khusro's music, which is composed of North Indian music, some classical Persian, and some of his own creations.

In the performance of *sama*, music and poetry fuse together, and have a special effect on the listener. They reach a spiritual state which expresses itself in gestures—weeping, vocalising and ultimately a dance of ecstasy. An offering is made to the *Qawwal* with the permission of the Shaikh or presiding elders. It is first offered to him. By accepting this offering on behalf of his Saint, his representative validates the link between the devotee who is offering and the Saint, thereby committing the Saint's beneficence and also thus reinforcing his own position.

WHEREVER *sama* is practiced by the *Chishtiyas* of South Asia, what is crucial is the immediate power of the spiritual-emotional impact of the *sama* songs, the power of music serving the power of Saints in *Darbar-e-Auliya*. □



# Sufism in Kashmir

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A.Q. Rafiqi

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**A**LMOST simultaneously with the establishment of Muslim rule in Kashmir (AD 1320), and the organization of *Khanqahs* and *Silsilahs*. Sufism was introduced here. Sufi activities began in earnest only towards the end of 14th century. By the end of 16th century, four great Sufi orders, Suharwardi, Kubravi, Naqshbandi and Qadiri reached the valley. Along with these orders, developed an indigenous Sufi order known as the Rishi Order. The Rishi practices and philosophy of life differed in many ways from those of the other Sufi orders of Kashmir. The Rishis did not generally concern themselves with preachings nor were they interested in discussions and debates. They were mainly concerned with controlling their carnal desires. Through their teachings they impressed upon the common people the need to live a pious life. Most of the Sufis who arrived in Kashmir from Persia and Central Asia were deeply impressed with the teachings of Shaikh Alauddaulah Simnani, who did not approve of the quiet and withdrawn ascetic life. He believed that the duty of the Sufi was to preach and teach.

SUFISM in Kashmir exhibits two different attitudes towards life—the Sufi as an ascetic and the Sufi as a missionary. Syed Ali Hamadani and many others who came to Kashmir, established *khanqahs* all over the valley which were not only used for offering prayers but became important centres of learning. These *khanqahs* helped in the dissemination of Islamic spiritual and intellectual values. The Sufis, through their personal behaviour, simplicity, purity of thought and high ideals, imparted moral education. The *khanqahs* were places where high and low, rich and the poor, and people from all walks of life met together, leaving all the worldly distinctions outside. All tensions, conflicts and complexes were resolved there. Common practices of penance and worship brought forth the noblest qualities of their souls and made them understand the 'divine significance of life'.

Most of the Suharwardi and Kubravi saints of Kashmir occupied positions of Qazi and Shaikh ul Islam and dabbled in politics. They visited nobles and royal courts and established matrimonial relations with them. On the other hand, the Rishi saints of Kashmir preached love of mankind, did not concern themselves with missionary activities and kept aloof from the ruling classes. They practised mortification of the individual soul, intense exercises borrowed from Hindu ascetics, a hatred for worldly life, and emphasis on individual salvation. The Rishi movement flourished from the first half of 15th century. Sheikh Nuruddin, commonly known as Nund Resh, developed and popularized it. The piety of the Rishi order left a deep imprint upon the minds of Kashmiris. These two different attitudes led to two different paths and the conflict between the two became a latent ingredient of the Kashmiri social pattern. □

# **Self as a Problem in Islam: A Reading of Abdul Qadir Gilani's Discourse**

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**Chaiwat Satha-Anand**

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**T**HE problem of *self* is common in Islam and Buddhism. According to both religions, to gain a deep insight into truth, one has to empty one's mind of all thought. The greatest obstacle in attaining this state is *attachment to self*. Hence *self* is the main hindrance to spiritual enlightenment. This article tries to show how the problem of *self* is common to both Islam and Buddhism, and that such commonality is possible mainly because of the monotheistic nature of Islam.

ABDUL Qadir Gilani was born in 1077 in Persia, and was a direct descendant of the Prophet. He was honest and truthful from his childhood. He spent many years in prayer, meditation and in great poverty, as a recluse going without food or shelter for days at a time. He lived in solitude for eleven years and, thus, overcame all temptations and worldly vanities. His teaching career began in 1118, and his sermons attracted many followers, both Muslims and non-Muslims. During the day, he would give lessons on the commentary of Quran, principles of Islamic law, verdicts on legal questions, and practice of

charity and self-denial. His nights were spent in worship of God and prayers.

THIS was a period of strife between the exponents of Shariat (tenets) and Tariqat (spiritual ways) of Islam. Gilani's significance was in his ability to strike a balance between the two extremes. His book *Futuh-ul-Ghaib* (The Revelation of the Unseen) is a remarkable treatise on mysticism. It has eighty discourses dealing with his teaching on spiritualism. In the tenth discourse he deals with the problem of human attachment to the *self*. He begins by differentiating between God and human *self*. He writes, 'Self of man is opposed to God because it entertains presumptions which give rise to such worldly attachments as false hopes, passions and sensual pleasures which are untrue and, as such, opposed to God, who is Truth. Since all human beings are God's creation, and subservient to Him, they must surrender to God's will. This can only be done by freeing one's self from all untruths and by opposition to *self*.' An enlightening and interesting angle pointed out by Gilani is that, though all human beings must submit to the will of God and must serve Him, yet at the end of true and selfless service and self-denial, there emerges a friendship between God and man. In Islam, we see it in saints who are known as *Auliya* or next of kin to God.

THE path of God is the path of truth. By running after worldly desires, one would be led astray from this path. One can only reach God by discarding his own ego or self. One must fight one's self at all times against attachment, dependence, fear and coveting. A state of piety can be achieved if human beings free themselves from all these desires. Only then, can the true path be found.

EXCEPT God Himself, all other things are His creation. He is permanent, all else is temporary. He is the only Real and, therefore, worth depending upon. But, this should not lead to fatalism. Here Gilani emphasizes the importance of human effort. He tries to strike a balance between the two beliefs, one being that humans have

absolute control over their origin and action, and the other that they have no responsibility and all is destiny or fate. He points out that action belongs to God in the matter of *creation*, and men in matters of *effort*, which in Islam is referred to as reward and punishment.

WHILE highlighting human effort, one must take care not to judge unwisely and impatiently, but to take the guidelines from the Holy Book, and the practices of the Prophet of Islam. When encountering dubious situations, one must abstain from any judgement that shows bias, selfish motive or attachment. Patience is a very important virtue as human beings do not have knowledge. While knowing one's limitation, it is wise to be guided by humility and not by sinful pride in walking along the path of truth.

Once the state of piety is achieved, one approaches the state of *Wilayat* (saintliness). At this level, human beings stand opposed to their passions and fully obey God's commandments. There are two kinds of obedience. The first results from God's commandments as stipulated in religious doctrines. This means humans can take their means of subsistence from the world to the extent that is considered their just desert, but they should avoid indulging in worldly pleasures. At the same time they must perform their duties. The second kind of obedience is to God's hidden commandments. Here, one is free to do things permissible. Yet, one refrains from human initiative and waits for divine order. Finally, there is no hidden commandment but just an act of God, which entails a state of complete resignation and annihilation (*Fana*). This final state is reached, first by moral transformation of the soul by extinction of all desires, then a mental abstraction where through concentration upon the thought of God, all objects of perception, thoughts, actions disappear, and finally the highest stage of annihilation is reached, when even the consciousness of this attainment vanishes. This is the cessation of all conscious thought. What remains is only the Divine Essence. To obtain this final and absolute obedience to God, one must rid oneself of any will, purpose, reliance, and be completely free from *self*. One has to be like a new-

born baby, an unconscious patient, or a dead body, in whom no thought of *self* exists. This aspect of Islam provides an inter-religious understanding especially between Buddhism and Islam. □

# Contribution of Sufi Poets to the Language, Literature and Culture of Punjab

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Harnam Singh Shan

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THE contribution of Sufi poets to the language, literature and culture of Punjab is not only profound but is also vast and varied. Their mystical songs, in particular, are the pride of the whole of Punjab. They form the common and invaluable heritage of all Punjabi people. These songs are 'sweet utterances of those love-lost souls'. Reading and listening to them, even today, the Punjabis feel elated. The lyrical effusions of those blessed men gave birth to a distinct stream of poetry called *Sufi kavya-dhara*, which inherits a long literary tradition. It found its moorings in Punjab after the Muslim conquest, and the arrival of preachers of Islam, some of whom had a Sufi bent of mind. This important stream was started by Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-e-Shakar during the 13th century, and was developed by poets like Shah Husain, Sultan Bahu, Bulhe Shah, Syed Ali Haider, Fard Faqir, Hashim Shah, Maulvi Ghulam Rasool, Syed Miran Shah and Khwaja Ghulam Farid. The liberal attitude and reciprocal policy of give and take that it adopted, and the influence it exercised, proved far-reaching in the annals of the literary, cultural and religious history of Punjab. It also absorbed the essence of Vedantic

and Sikh thought and influenced thought and action in due course.

THE impact of this strain on the Punjabi language and literature has been considerable. Even poets of the modern period like Bhai Vir Singh, the father of modern Punjabi literature, have been effected by its impact. These Sufi poets adopted the language of the common Punjabis for the expression of their thought and conveyed their message directly and effectively. The credit of introducing the element of popular love legends of Punjab, to Sufi verse, also goes to these poets. Among the later Sufi poets of Punjab, Syed Ghulam Gilani Rohtaki, Maulana Ghulam Rasool, Syed Karam Ali Shah and Yatim Shah contributed much to the mystic poetry.

PUNJAB is justly proud of having given birth to this great moral, spiritual and literary tradition spanning a period of about nine centuries. This glorious tradition has not only initiated literary writing in Punjab, but has also developed and enriched its treasures all through this long period of history.

THESE mystics evolved a common and composite language which became an ideal vehicle for conveying their thought and message to Punjabis of all regions and religions. They derived the required images and similes from the everyday life of Punjab, particularly from the rural areas. Their usage made it convenient for the Punjabis to understand its content and grasp its meanings. The Sufi saints and poets of Punjab contributed not only to the linguistic, literary and cultural heritage of Punjab but also identified themselves intrinsically with its land and people. □

# Elements of Cultural Synthesis as Reflected in the Sufi Literary Works of Mulla Daud and Usman

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Savitri Chandra Shobha

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SUFI *silsilahs*, which had entered the Indian subcontinent at the beginning of the 11th century, had spread far and wide over the north and even the southern part of the subcontinent by the end of the 14th century. During this period, the Sufis had many opportunities of interacting with the Hindus. Many people came to their *khanqahs* or the tombs of Sufi saints, seeking their blessings, as they had gained the reputation of being holy men who could perform miracles and cure sick people. The Sufis also met many yogis including Jains, ascetics and *sanyasins* of various denominations. Bhakti songs praising Radha and Krishna were also sung in the musical gatherings (*sama*) of the Sufis. Some of them, such as Baba Farid Ganj-e-Shakar, knew local languages and started writing in them. Of these works, the earliest and largest are in Hindi. The earliest work available to us is *Chandayan* of Mulla Daud completed in 1379-80. Mulla Daud was a Sufi and a *khalifa* of Shaikh Zajnuddin, who was the son of the sister of Shaikh Naseeruddin Chiragh Delhi. His *Chandayan* was read even from the pulpit at the Friday prayers and had an ecstatic effect on the audience. The preacher explained

that he chose it for his discourse because, 'The whole of it is divine Truth. It is compatible with the interpretation of some verses of the Quran.'

THE Sufi writers emphasized those aspects of the Supreme Being which were acceptable and familiar to the majority of the people, both Hindus and Muslims.

BOTH Mulla Daud and Shaikh Usman show considerable familiarity with Hindu beliefs and practices. Mulla Daud refers to the four Vedas by name. He also refers to both Rama and Krishna. Stories of Rama, Sita and Hanuman passed into the Sufi legend and are used by Malik Mohammad Jayesi in his *Padmavat* and other works. He also refers to many Hindu traditions and beliefs. Shaikh Usman in his *Chitravali* written in early 17th century shows familiarity with the legends of Rama and Krishna and also refers to the story of *Mahabharata*. Mulla Daud makes many references to temples devoted to the worship of Shiva. All the Sufi poets, including Mulla Daud and Usman affirm that the path of love was superior to everything in this world. For treading this path, the guidance of a guru or *pir* was considered essential. One of the most significant aspects which has been put forward by the Sufi poets, is the concept of *Marjia*. It implies that the seeker abandons all worldly desires and by treading the path indicated by the guru, attains a new life and becomes capable of treading the path of love. The Hindi Sufi poets try to synthesize or integrate the Hindu and Muslim traditions, especially the yogic and Bhakti traditions with Sufi traditions. □

# **Impact of Baba Farid on Punjab**

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**Gurcharan Singh**

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**F**ROM the earliest times, the people of Punjab have been known for their liberal and unorthodox outlook on life. There has been less conservatism in Punjab with regard to the caste system also. There were frequent cases of intermixture of castes and free exchange of occupations, between them. The people were indifferent to the observance of religious rites. There existed a social and cultural gap between the orthodox and non-conservative elements of the composite culture in Punjab. It is against this background that we shall discuss the profound influence that some Sufi saints, notably Hazrat Baba Farid Ganj-i-Shakar, exercised on Punjab's language and culture.

SUFIS like Baba Farid preached ideas of love and peace. In India, Sufism also imbibed some of the ideas of Hinduism which were not in conflict with Islam. It preached tolerance towards other religions. The Sufi centres were visited by non-Muslims in large numbers. Such visitors were generally the poor and afflicted persons in search of 'help and encouragement in the midst of their miseries. The Sufis kept themselves aloof from politics. Converting non-Muslims to Islam was not part of the

mission of the Chishti Sufis. The Sufi attitude towards Hindus and their religion was of sympathetic understanding and adjustment. Likewise, the Sufi saints and Sikh Gurus tried to create a common culture even when they belonged to different religious traditions. The Muslim mystics liquidated social, ideological and linguistic barriers between various cultural groups and helped in the development of a common cultural outlook. Their *khanqahs* were veritable centres of cultural synthesis where ideas were freely exchanged and a common medium was evolved.

GURU Nanak preached the principles of universal tolerance and human brotherhood. He also met Shaikh Ibrahim to collect the hymns which were incorporated into the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Apart from his teaching of universal brotherhood, service of man and respect for human life, another reason for including Babaji's hymns was the use of Punjabi language by him. Like the Sufis, Guru Nanak also preached that the true essence of religion was the love of mankind and service of all.

BABA Farid's deep impact on Punjab is also evident from the cordial relations that existed between the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims during the early Mughal rule. Many Muslims came forward to fight for Guru Gobind Singh against the later Mughal rulers. The tradition of Hindu-Sikh-Muslim friendship, handed over to posterity by Baba Farid, did not end with the Gurus but continued until the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who entrusted honour and responsibilities to all. In our own times Baba Farid is venerated like other Gurus by the Sikhs and Hindus of Punjab. A three-day festival dedicated to Baba Farid is held in Faridkot called Baba Farid Aagman Purb, where thousands gather to pay homage to him. Baba Farid is thus, a kind of cultural bridge not only between various sections of the people in Punjab but, he is also a vital link between India and Pakistan. The early phase of Sufism anticipated some interesting developments which received institutional forms under the aegis of Sikh Gurus. One of these was the adoption of the regional languages for purpose of oral communication with the local people. Baba Farid's impact on the Punjabi language and literature is as wide and as profound as on Punjab's life and lifestyle. He is, in fact, the father of Punjabi literature. □

# Bird Images in Shaikh Farid's Poetry

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Man Mohan Singh

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**I**N the poetry of pre-Nanak saints, no one has used bird symbolism and imagery as powerfully and evocatively as Shaikh Farid. Guru Nanak's hymns also reflect a naturalist's understanding and fondness for bird life. Shaikh Farid has used bird images based mostly as myths and symbols. The British were not the first or the only ones to show interest in bird life in India. We find that much earlier, Babar had described birds in his *Babar Nama*, and also had them painted.

THE sacred poetry of Shaikh Farid, incorporated in *Granth Sahib*, has twentyone general and specific bird references. But the main species of recurring birds in his poetry are six. The predominant theme of his poetry is transition, decay and death. He compares temporal life to birds of passage who must perish, and, to human glory which fades away. For him, the bird that symbolizes life, is a passing phase in the garden of this world. The distant drums of doom are beating, so they must prepare for the journey's end, that is, death. He compares a lonely bird to a lonely life, bereft and yet enmeshed in worldly pursuits and desire, from which only God's mercy can save it

In his poetry, Shaikh Farid describes some birds, like cranes, as symbols of human vanity and lust, which are destroyed by a hawk, in the fierce struggle for existence and survival. He also mentions birds, like egrets, pretending to be swans and imitating them with fatal consequences. Here the comparison is with human beings who are also prone to pretensions. He refers to *maya* in his poetry – an illusion, which expresses the futility of human endeavour or a world of spiritual make-belief. No other Sufi saint has used bird comparison with such effective poetic advantage. Some birds are symbols of tremendous grandeur; while others are humble and lowly, thus symbolizing the sublime and the ridiculous aspects of human beings. We also perceive that beyond the physiological realities, the birds are placed within the vast cosmic framework of the Creator, who manipulates in His Grand Design, the transformation of all species, avian or the homo-sapiens.

SIMILARLY, in developing his spiritual symbolism, Shaikh Farid has depicted the cry of the *koel* and the pathos of the *papiha* in *birha*, as the lament of the human soul, which is separated from the Divine Spirit.

THE Swan's life is shown as human life which glides through the lake of being. All this is transient. One day it will perish, as the snow-white purity of the swan plumage will mingle with dust; the human beings absorbed in worldly pleasures would also make a reluctant exit, and return to dust. The overwhelming canopy of death hangs over the lowly as well as the high.

THE crow, depicted as the scavenger of the flesh, also brings the transience of life into focus. The eyes out of which light has faded are still waiting. The body though decaying still harbours a longing for the Divine. Thus the futility and tenacity of human yearning is brought out in poignant poetic symbolism.

THUS, one emerges enthralled with the study of bird images in Shaikh Farid's poetry. Although he is not an ornithologist, yet he has

described bird images and their myth in his poetry very accurately and beautifully. □



# Maulana Azad and Maulana Jalaluddin Balkhi - A Comparison

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Mohammad Siddique Sailani

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**M**AULANA Azad, like Maulana Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi, Syed Jamaluddin Afghani and Allama Iqbal and other renowned scholars and philosophers of the world cannot be said to belong to any particular country, religion or community as his views and writings, like the others, have a universal appeal.

MOHIUDDIN Ahmad, better known as Maulana Azad, was the son of Maulana Khairuddin, a descendant of Shaikh Jamaluddin Dehalvi, a lineage committed to the service of religion as scholars of theology. His forefathers migrated to India from Herat during Babur's reign. Maulana's family went to Mecca in 1857. While in Mecca, Maulana Khairuddin wrote a book in Arabic in ten volumes, and became famous in the Islamic world. Maulana Azad was born in AD 1888 .

MAULANA Azad was a great political leader of the Indian sub-continent. He fought against British imperialism for the freedom of India and went to jail six times. His way of thinking was like Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru. He was a federalist and revolutionary. He believed in individuals fighting for the upliftment of society.

HE revived and reformed the religious understanding of the Muslims and struggled against their narrow-mindedness, as these were the main hindrances to the progress of a nation. He wrote, 'Those who do not follow reason and wisdom on their own, deny the truth.' Closing of the mind, he believed, leads to blind faith which misguides the individuals.

AZAD says that among the creations of God, mankind is the most superior and man has a mission in this world. Both Maulana Jalaluddin Balkhi and Maulana Azad emphasized that all religions were like many rays of the sun, the differences are in the religious practices because the final goal of all the religions is the same. According to Azad, the ultimate truth is not achieved through knowledge or reasoning but through perception. His philosophy gives emphasis to 'self-appraisal' or 'self-recognition'. He was interested in poetry and music. For him both were a means of attaining purity of sentiments and denouncement of hypocritical asceticism and selfishness.

AZAD's writings like *Tarjuman ul Quran*, *Ghubar-i-khatu*, and *Speeches of Maulana Azad* have been translated into Pashto. □

# **Al-Insan Al-Kamil in the Context of the World Culture**

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**Marietta Stepanyants**

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**T**WO tendencies have co-existed in the world and they are connected with the normative-social and mystical-individualistic patterns. The first pattern is correlated with the postulate of world and life affirmation. It accepts the existing world order as settled and ordained by God. There is a struggle to preserve it by strictly following norms, rules and directions accepted in the society. In India, the normative pattern was through obeying laws as prescribed in the sacred Vedas. A normative pattern exists in the Islamic world too, where life is arranged according to Shariah. Within the normative-social pattern, active attitude to life is socially directed at improving man's environment. Active attitude may be considered optimistic as regards the chance of attaining an ideal world order. The mystic-individualistic pattern was influenced in its formation by the conditions which provoke relinquishing the hope of release from suffering, evil and injustice so that man looks for salvation and ideals beyond his surroundings. He directs his efforts at self-perfection in order to get closer to the Absolute. Thus, man comes to renounce this world. The way of asceticism and mystical search is suggested in the *Bhagvad Gita* and in Buddhism.

In Islamic culture, the ideal of the *Perfect Man*, fashioned in exact conformity to the Shariah rules, is Al-Insan Al-Kamil of Sufis. Man is regarded as the highest form of Divine manifestation. Ibn-i-Arabi compares him with 'Bezel in the seal of ring. He is a sign, a mark engraved on the seal with which God's treasury is guarded.' Man is called the representative of God, whose creation he safeguards. Sufis quote Quran to prove that man's predestination is to be the receptacle of the Divine. Man must strive to attain perfection, his heart being likened to a mirror, in which God's reflection is to appear. It must be polished so that the reflection should correspond with what is reflected. The sense of man's existence consists in performing the supreme duty, and that means constantly striving to attain self-perfection. Both, in Buddhism and Sufism, the attaining of perfection begins with adhering to common rules of human morals, continuous striving for self-perfection, strenuous search for the truth, testifying to real affirmation of life as a process of constant transformation.

With rationalism and pragmatism rampant in the world, the achievement of sciences and techniques having extended the sphere of man's influence into the boundaries of the cosmos, there arose an interest in the irrational and the mystical; people appeared inclined to select a mystical behaviour pattern. Now, the pattern of individual self perfection is regarded as an indispensable ingredient in the process of social transformation. Society cannot be perfected without the perfection of individuals, and personal perfection cannot be separated from the social. What mankind is in need of at present, is not opposing the various traditions but, concentrating efforts at turning to account all the spiritual wealth acquired in the course of history. Hence, a dialectic approach is needed that shall rid human thought of stereotypes and enable it to comprehend and utilise various traditions so that creative development is assured. □

# Sufi Poetry in Avadhi

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Ram Singh Tomar

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**A**VADHI dialect is spoken in Eastern regions of India, i.e. U.P. and Bihar. Braj Bhasha spoken in Western regions of the Hindi belt remained the language of poetry. Literary compositions of high quality were compiled in Avadhi but later even in Avadh it was replaced by Braj Bhasha. In the cultural arena, Sufi philosophy occupies an important place. Sufis have spread concepts of spiritual love and beauty, and advocacy of ethical values, in perhaps all the languages of the world. A unique combination of mundane and spiritual love and universal brotherhood is manifest in the great Sufi poetry. Prominent among the Sufi poets who wrote in Avadhi are Daud, Kutbun, Malik Mohammad Jayesi and Manjhan, and many others. Like other great Sufi poets and saints, they have made novel contribution in the building of a universal culture. Their art and meditation transcends geographical boundaries and helps in building a composite culture.

SUFISM aims at unity with the Supreme Being; to become one with God. This is achieved by means of love. Man gets completely absorbed in God's beauty and thus, he is rendered selfless. He

becomes transcendental, ecstatic and his heart becomes pure, free from all sins, lust or revenge. This state is called *Fana* or annihilation, and through *Fana*, this ultimate love of God, and unity with God is achieved.

THIS theme of love has been chosen by Sufi poets all over the world; and also by Sufi poets of *Avadhi*. They have chosen popular folklore and simple love stories which they can alter and through which they can reach people, communicate with them, and convey their message.

MAULANA Daud wrote *Chandayan*, a folk love story of Chanda. Kutbun composed *Mrigavati*, Manjhan wrote *Madhumalti*, and Malik Mohammad Jayesi wrote *Padmavat* — a classic. They have all depicted their heroines as women of great beauty and virtue, because they want to show that internal beauty becomes manifest in external beauty, and where there is real beauty, God resides there. The beauty of these heroines symbolizes the light emanating from God. They have described this beauty in great detail, each part of the body symbolizing some aspect of nature which is a manifestation of Divine Beauty.

THIS beauty attracts many lovers who are handsome and brave and have to overcome numerous hardships and obstacles to achieve a union with the beloved, which actually signifies man's union with God, or of a worshipper with the worshipped after going through many trials and tribulations in the material world. When the lover comes in contact with the beloved he sees an entire universe in her. In mystic poetry, treatment is always symbolic. The beauty of human beings is only a glimpse of Divine Beauty. This successful blend of poetry and philosophy is matchless.

IN Jayesi's epic poem *Padmavat* there is a beautiful mysteriousness coupled with a deep emotional effect. He has blended the Persian style and Indian culture, and, with his broad outlook, and tolerance, has composed a message of love and brotherhood. If he was to be

asked whether he had composed *Padmavat* from the Muslim point of view or Hindu approach, he would have said, 'I do not see any difference', for he was a true Sufi and a follower of the religion of man. □



# Identifying the Quran with God's Speech: Abul Kalam Azad and the *Masalah-yi Khalq-i-Quran*

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Roderic Vassie

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THE ninth article of faith in the *al Wasiyah* creed attributed to Abu Hanifa reads, 'We believe that the Quran is God's uncreated speech. It was revealed and sent down from Heaven by Him. Being neither identical to Him nor distinct from Him, the Quran should more properly be termed one of His attributes. Copies can be made of it, it can be recited or memorised without its residing in any of these forms.' It was after reading through this article together, that the Imam of my local mosque turned to me, saying that this point at least had long since ceased to be a bone of contention within the Muslim community. Maulana Azad had also written an article in his weekly '*Al Balagh*' about the theological disputes on the nature of Quran.

THE Motazilites came to believe that the Quran was created, and they persuaded the Caliph al Mamun to accept this doctrine. A Meccan scholar, Abd al Aziz ibn Yahya al-Kinani, went to Baghdad, and in the course of a dispute with a leading Motazilite, Bishr ibn Ghayath, at Marisi defended his belief that the Quran was uncreated. Famous

Jurist Ahmad Ibn Hanbal also defended this belief. Ali Ibn Ismail al Ashari, a former Motazilite, produced a formulation of the Muslim creed strong enough to defeat the Motazilites. The theologians agree that God's speech does not consist of letters and sounds. Shaikh Abu Bakr al Shibli has defined the divine name 'Ancient' (*al-Qadim*) as meaning that God's essence has no bounds and His word exists without letters. This belief is confirmed by Ibn-i-Arabi who adds that God's speech expresses itself without recourse to organs of speech such as human beings possess. As regards written copies, the ink, paper and script are created since they are the products of human beings. However, God's speech remains uncreated. The Motazilites believed that since Quran is a thing and God is the creator of all things, the Quran cannot but be created. Kinani concluded that since Quran is God's speech and since God's speech is uncreated the Quran, therefore, is uncreated. The Motazilites were speaking in terms of *mushaf* while their adversaries conceived of the Quran in terms of the message revealed to the Prophet.

AZAD ignored the proofs of Asharites and al Ghazali, demanding unquestioning acceptance of the doctrines of 'noble predecessors'. He criticized the Motazilites accusing them of leading the Muslims into error and corruption. He suggested that the Quran's uncreatedness rests rather in its structural reality and order of the words and letters which flowed from the tongue of revelation. The real lesson to be drawn from the whole controversy is that the true *ulema* persevered in commanding the community to do what was right and forbidding them from doing what was wrong according to the Quran and the Sunna.

THE only definite statement one can make concerning the relationship of the Quran to God's speech is identical to that made concerning the relationship of God's speech to God Himself, that it is in terms of the formulation in the creed, 'Neither it nor other than it'. □

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